



the mystagogue



Primary resources

The Search, by the Augustine Institute

<https://watch.formed.org/the-search-1>

The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium), an apostolic exhortation from Pope Francis (also available on Amazon)

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html

1 What Do You Seek?/A Joy Ever New

Preparation

Watch *The Search*

Episode 1: What Do You Seek?

Questions for reflection as you watch the video

What kinds of things does it appear that people are seeking? What seems to make them happy (or what do they think makes them happy)?

What kinds of things do we Christians seek, really? What do we seem to think will make us happy? Is happiness even the right goal?

What is it that will really answer the deep longing we all share? What should we all be seeking?

Readings in *The Joy of the Gospel*

Introduction (Paragraphs 1-18)

A Joy Ever New, a Joy Which Is Shared

The Delightful and Comforting Joy of Evangelizing

The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Faith

Questions for reflection as you read (numbers in parenthesis refer to paragraph numbers)

The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew. (1)

Do you really believe this? Do you really experience it?

What is the great danger in today's world as the Pope describes it (2)?

What is his invitation (3)? How will you respond to it?

There are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter. (6)

Is the Pope describing your life? Can we really share the joy of the gospel when our lives are like this? What is the answer to this problem (7-8)?

Why should evangelism be a natural thing for the Christian, and the church, to do (9-10)?

Where does the newness Pope Francis described come from (11)? What then drives our mission to evangelize (12-13)?

What are the three primary 'settings' or areas of need for the 'new evangelism' (14)?

What does John Paul II call the "first task of the Church" (15)? Answer Pope Francis' question: "What would happen if we were to take these words seriously" (15)?

Scripture

Zephaniah 3.11-20

Acts 16.20-34

Group discussion

Questions for group discussion (numbers in parenthesis refer to paragraph numbers)

- 1. What are the big questions we all often ask (or even forget to ask)? What are some of the ways people often attempt to answer those questions?

- 2. What is the longing we all really share? What is our common motive?

- 3. What is the answer to that longing for happiness, meaning, and fulfillment as we understand it as Christians? Do we really find it? Why is it that many Christians do not experience the joy Pope Francis describes that comes from encounter with Jesus?

The great danger in today's world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience. Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God's voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades. This is a very real danger for believers too. Many fall prey to it, and end up resentful, angry and listless. That is

no way to live a dignified and fulfilled life; it is not God’s will for us, nor is it the life in the Spirit which has its source in the heart of the risen Christ. (2)

- 4. As we review the litany of joy found in scripture (4-5), what do we do with Pope Francis’ challenge: “Why should we not also enter into this great stream of Joy?” How can we?

Thanks solely to this encounter—or renewed encounter—with God’s love, which blossoms into an enriching friendship, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelization. For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others? (8)

- 5. Why does the Pope suggest that evangelism is both natural and delightful/comforting? How can we find it to be new, fresh, and breaking “through the dull categories with which we would enclose him” such that “he constantly amazes us by his divine creativity?”

- 6. Who should we be trying to reach through the ‘new evangelism’? How important is this task?

2 Who Are You?/A Church Which Goes Forth

Preparation

Watch *The Search*

Episode 2: What Are You?

Questions for reflection as you watch the video

Why do you think it is so common for people to think of the human person as only a material thing (just a body and a bundle of neurons in the brain)?

What evidence do we have that we are more than just a material being? What does that evidence suggest about who we are made to be and for what purpose?

How might our nature as people relate to what we really long for? What does it suggest about how we might find it?

Readings in *The Joy of the Gospel*

Chapter 1: The Church's Missionary Transformation (Paragraphs 19-49)

- A Church Which Goes Forth
- Pastoral Activity and Conversion
- From the Heart of the Gospel
- A Mission Embodied within Human Limits
- A Mother with an Open Heart

Questions for reflection as you read (numbers in parenthesis refer to paragraph numbers)

Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the "peripheries" in need of the light of the Gospel. (20)

Is the 'missionary mandate' of Jesus optional for any Christian or any Christian community (20)?

An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. (24)

What does it mean to take the initiative in sharing the joy of the gospel (24)? What kinds of first steps are we called to make as individuals and as an 'evangelizing community'?

What does the Pope mean by a 'conversion' of the church (25-33)? What does he include that needs to be changed?

What are some of the most important truths that need to be understood and communicated about the gospel (34-39)?

What does it mean to recognize the human limits of the church and her mission (40-45)? In what ways does the church need to grow to be more effective in sharing the gospel?

If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: "Give them something to eat" (Mk 6:37). (49)

How can the church be “a mother with an open heart” (46-49)?

Scripture

1 Corinthians 9.16-23

Matthew 25.31-46

Matthew 28.16-20

Group discussion

Questions for group discussion (numbers in parenthesis refer to paragraph numbers)

1. Why is it narrow and limiting to think of the human person as merely physical? What does it say about us to recognize that we are more than matter that responds to stimulus?

2. Why is it narrow and limiting to think of the church as only an ‘outdated institution’ here for its members? What does it say about the church, and each of us as Christians, to recognize that we are more than rules and customs, sacraments and structures, hierarchy and disciplines?

The Church which “goes forth” is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast. Such a community has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father’s infinite mercy.
(24)

3. For those who are asking who they really are and what they are here for, how do we, as an evangelizing community, reach them with the answer? What kinds of effort and risk must we make?

4. What gets in the way of the church reaching those who seek to know more about themselves and the truth about the world? What needs to be challenged and even changed about the church for us to demonstrate and express the very heart of the gospel?

In her ongoing discernment, the Church can also come to see that certain customs not directly connected to the heart of the Gospel, even some which have deep historical roots, are no longer properly understood and appreciated. Some of these customs may be beautiful, but they no longer serve as means of communicating the Gospel. We should not be afraid to re-examine them. At the same time, the Church has rules or precepts which may have been quite effective in their time, but no longer have the same usefulness for directing and shaping people's lives. Saint Thomas Aquinas pointed out that the precepts which Christ and the apostles gave to the people of God "are very few." Citing Saint Augustine, he noted that the precepts subsequently enjoined by the Church should be insisted upon with moderation "so as not to burden the lives of the faithful" and make our religion a form of servitude, whereas "God's mercy has willed that we should be free." (43)

5. What barriers might we see in the human limitations of the church that get in the way of sharing the meaning of the gospel fully and with everyone? What can and should we do to communicate the truth of the gospel in spite of, or even beyond, these barriers?

6. What does it mean for the church's doors to be wide open? Pope Francis writes that "Frequently, we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators" (47). How can we change?

3 Why a God?/Challenges of Today's World

Preparation

Watch *The Search*

Episode 3: Why a God?

Questions for reflection as you watch the video

Why do you think we have given up on God? Do we think science has disproven him? Do we think society is better off without him?

Why is it more reasonable to believe in God than not to?

Why is it more fulfilling to believe in God than not to?

Readings in *The Joy of the Gospel*

Chapter 2: Amid the Crisis of Communal Commitment (Paragraphs 50-109)

Some Challenges in Today's World

Temptations Faced by Pastoral Workers

Questions for reflection as you read (numbers in parenthesis refer to paragraph numbers)

Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a "throw away" culture which is now spreading. It is no longer simply about exploitation and oppression, but something new. Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be a part of the society in which we live; those excluded are no longer society's underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised—they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the "exploited" but the outcast, the "leftovers". (53)

What challenges does the Pope identify in today's world that threaten the life and dignity both of God's people and those to whom we are to bring the gospel (52-60)?

What challenges in culture make it difficult for the church to evangelize and that obscure the message and hope of the gospel (61-67)?

At a time when we most need a missionary dynamism which will bring salt and light to the world, many lay people fear that they may be asked to undertake some apostolic work and they seek to avoid any responsibility that may take away from their free time. For example, it has become very difficult today to find trained parish catechists willing to persevere in this work for some years. Something similar is also happening with priests who are obsessed with protecting their free time. This is frequently due to the fact that people feel an overbearing need to guard their personal freedom, as though the task of evangelization was a dangerous poison rather than a joyful response to God's love which summons us to mission and makes us fulfilled and productive. Some resist giving themselves over completely to mission and thus end up in a state of paralysis and acedia. (81)

Pope Francis dedicates considerable space on the temptations that face 'pastoral workers' (76-109). Which of these have you witnessed in clergy, religious, and those in vocational ministry in the church? Which do you think are also challenges to any Christian seeking to fulfill our call to embody and share the gospel?

Scripture

John 15.1-16.33 (this is a long passage that I encourage you to read as if you are sitting with the Jesus as one of his disciples).

Group discussion

Questions for group discussion (numbers in parenthesis refer to paragraph numbers)

1. The answers we see many attempt to the question of the meaning of life are often made without any sense of God. What is the result?

2. Why do so many seem to reject even the idea of God? Do we see that in the church as well? If so, how?

Pastoral workers can thus fall into a relativism which, whatever their particular style of spirituality or way of thinking, proves even more dangerous than doctrinal relativism. It has to do with the deepest and inmost decisions that shape their way of life. This practical relativism consists in acting as if God did not exist, making decisions as if the poor did not exist, setting goals as if others did not exist, working as if people who have not received the Gospel did not exist. It is striking that even some who clearly have solid doctrinal and spiritual convictions frequently fall into a lifestyle which leads to an attachment to financial security, or to a desire for power or human glory at all cost, rather than giving their lives to others in mission. (80)

3. Pope Francis explores many challenges to becoming the missional embodiment of the gospel the church, and every Christian, is called—in the world, in culture, and in the church. Is there a common thread to these challenges?

The process of secularization tends to reduce the faith and the Church to the sphere of the private and personal. Furthermore, by completely rejecting the transcendent, it has produced a growing deterioration of ethics, a weakening of the sense of personal and collective sin, and a steady increase in relativism. These have led to a general sense of disorientation, especially in the periods of adolescence and young adulthood which are so vulnerable to change. (64)

4. Of the many challenges the Pope describes, which are really the most debilitating to our mission? Does the gospel really have an answer to those challenges?

Challenges exist to be overcome! Let us be realists, but without losing our joy, our boldness and our hope-filled commitment. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary vigour! (109)

4 What's Our Story?/The Proclamation of the Gospel

Preparation

Watch *The Search*

Episode 4: What's Our Story?

Questions for reflection as you watch the video

Do we really have a story as humankind? If so, what is the story many seem to believe?

What is the real story? Why is it so much more amazing than what many believe?

What is your story? How is your story a part of the big story—the story of humankind, the world, and the God who made us?

What does your story mean for you? How does it make your life different?

Readings in *The Joy of the Gospel*

Chapter 3: The Proclamation of the Gospel part 1 (Paragraphs 110-144)

The Entire People of God Proclaims the Gospel

The Homily

Questions for reflection as you read (numbers in parenthesis refer to paragraph numbers)

Evangelism begins with the “explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ,” which is the telling of our story and the story of the world (110). What is the basis for that story (112)? Whose story is it (113)?

Why is it important to understand the way the gospel is inculturated, both in terms of the diversity of cultural expression and the way the gospel transforms all cultures (115-118)?

In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. *Mt 28:19*). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries", but rather that we are always "missionary disciples". (120)

Is this true? If so, what does it say to those who feel as if they are not ready to evangelize, to tell their story? What does it say to you?

Of the many ways Pope Francis describes sharing the gospel, which make the most sense to you, personally (122-134)? Have you engaged in any of these ways of 'proclaiming' the gospel?

Why is the homily so important in the process of proclaiming the gospel? What should it be (and what should it not be) (135-134)?

Scripture

Isaiah 61.1-4

Luke 19.37-40

Ephesians 3.1-21

Group discussion

Questions for group discussion (numbers in parenthesis refer to paragraph numbers)

1. What comes first in the story of God's people (112)? How is that related to the very nature of God that makes our story a love story?

2. How should we best understand the relationship of the gospel to culture, especially given that it is a story proclaimed to all that tells the truth of all and invites all into God's story (113-118)?

Of course, all of us are called to mature in our work as evangelizers. We want to have better training, a deepening love and a clearer witness to the Gospel. In this sense, we ought to let others be constantly evangelizing us. But this does not mean that we should postpone the evangelizing mission; rather, each of us should find ways to communicate Jesus wherever we are. All of us are called to offer others an explicit witness to the saving love of the Lord, who despite our imperfections offers us his closeness, his word and his strength, and gives meaning to our lives. In your heart you know that it is not the same to live without him; what you have come to realize, what has helped you to live and given you hope, is what you also need to communicate to others. Our falling short of perfection should be no excuse; on the contrary, mission is a constant stimulus not to remain mired in mediocrity but to continue growing. The witness of faith that each Christian is called to offer leads us to say with Saint Paul: "Not that I have already obtained this, or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own" (Phil 3:12-13). (121)

3. Must we be equipped to evangelize before doing so? What simple and powerful ways can we evangelize even as we work towards maturity as Christians and agents of the gospel (122-129)?

4. What does Pope Francis mean by 'popular piety' as it is important to the process of inculturating the gospel (122-126)? How is popular piety also related to individual proclamation of the gospel as well as inculturation through reason and education (127-134)?

It is worthy remembering that "the liturgical proclamation of the word of God, especially in the eucharistic assembly, is not so much a time for meditation and catechesis as a dialogue between God and his people, a dialogue in which the great deeds of salvation are proclaimed and the demands of the covenant are continually restated." The homily has special importance due to its eucharistic context: it surpasses all forms of catechesis as the supreme moment in the dialogue between God and his people which lead up to sacramental communion. The homily takes up once more the dialogue which the Lord has already established with his people. The preacher must know the heart of his community, in order to realize where its desire for God is alive and ardent, as well as where that dialogue, once loving, has been thwarted and is now barren. (137)

5. How does Pope Francis characterize the homily and its importance (135-144)? A great deal is said about the preacher and how he approaches the homily, but what does the Pope imply about all of us and what the homily is meant to do in preparing us to hear and in turn proclaim the gospel?

5 Who Is Jesus?/Kerygma

Preparation

Watch *The Search*

Episode 5: Who Is Jesus?

Questions for reflection as you watch the video

What does it mean to say that God is a person whom we can love and who can love us?

What does Jesus have to do with this love story between God and humankind?

If Jesus really was who he said he was, how does that change who we are and what we do in response to God?

Readings in *The Joy of the Gospel*

Chapter 3: The Proclamation of the Gospel part 2 (Paragraphs 160-175)

Evangelization and the Deeper Understanding of the *Kerygma*

Chapter 4: The Social Dimension of Evangelization part 1 (Paragraphs 176-185)

Communal and Societal Repercussions of the *Kerygma*

Questions for reflection as you read (numbers in parenthesis refer to paragraph numbers)

What is the *Kerygma* as Pope Francis describes it (160)? How is it best communicated and personalized?

Pope Francis focuses on the role of catechesis in communicating Christ and the reality of his love (163-168). What kinds of approaches might include those things any of us can use to share that love and the message of the gospel?

One who accompanies others has to realize that each person's situation before God and their life in grace are mysteries which no one can fully know from without. The Gospel tells us to correct others and to help them to grow on the basis of a recognition of the objective evil of their actions (cf. *Mt 18:15*), but without making judgments about their responsibility and culpability (cf. *Mt 7:1; Lk 6:37*). Someone good at such accompaniment does not give in to frustrations or fears. He or she invites others to let themselves be healed, to take up their mat, embrace the cross, leave all behind and go forth ever anew to proclaim the Gospel. Our personal experience of being accompanied and assisted, and of openness to those who accompany us, will teach us to be patient and compassionate with others, and to find the right way to gain their trust, their openness and their readiness to grow. (172)

What does it mean to accompany someone on their journey to know and become closer to God (169-173)?

How can we draw on the evangelistic value of the word of God as we accompany others on their journey to faith (174-175)? How can you prepare to use scripture to do so?

The kerygma has a clear social content: at the very heart of the Gospel is life in community and engagement with others. The content of the first proclamation has an immediate moral implication centered on charity. (177)

What does it mean to proclaim the message of Christ and his love through social action (176-179)? Why is it important to be aware of and active in promotion of the kingdom of God and not just individual relationship with Christ (180-181)?

What is so important about the social message of the the gospel (182-185)?

Scripture

Isaiah 41.17-20; 42.1-9

John 5.19-47; 6.25-40; 10.22-39; 14.6-7

Group discussion

Questions for group discussion (numbers in parenthesis refer to paragraph numbers)

1. Who do you say that Jesus is? What does it mean to say that Christianity is really a person, Jesus Christ?

2. For we who know who Jesus Christ is, who know him, what is the most significant way we demonstrate the truth that is Jesus (161)?

We must not think that in catechesis the kerygma gives way to a supposedly more "solid" formation. Nothing is more solid, profound, secure, meaningful and wisdom-filled than that initial proclamation. All Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the kerygma, which is reflected in and constantly illumines, the work of catechesis, thereby enabling us to understand more fully the significance of every subject which the latter treats. It is the message capable of responding to the desire for the infinite which abides in every human heart. The centrality of the kerygma calls for stressing those elements which are most needed today: it has to express God's saving love which precedes any moral and religious obligation on our part; it should not impose the truth but appeal to freedom; it should be marked by joy, encouragement, liveliness and a harmonious balance which will not reduce preaching to a few doctrines which are at times more philosophical than evangelical. All this demands on the part of the evangelizer certain attitudes which foster openness to the message: approachability, readiness for dialogue, patience, a warmth and welcome which is non-judgmental. (165)

3. Catechesis is important, and often takes place in the formal formation efforts of the Church, but what can we glean from the Pope's description of what that entails that we can all do as we carry God's message to others (163-168)?

4. How is accompaniment related to the notion that Jesus came to redeem everything it means to be a human being (169-173)?

5. Why is scripture so important in the process of evangelizing and forming new Christians (174-175)? How is scripture related to the initiative God took in reaching out to humankind?

To believe in a Father who loves all men and women with an infinite love means realizing that "he thereby confers upon them an infinite dignity." To believe that the Son of God assumed our human flesh means that each human person has been taken up into the very heart of God. To believe that Jesus shed his blood for us removes any doubt about the boundless love which ennoble each human being. Our redemption has a social dimension because "God, in Christ, redeems not only the individual person, but also the social relations existing between men." To believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in everyone means realizing that he seeks to penetrate every human situation and all social bonds: "The Holy Spirit can be said to possess an infinite creativity, proper to the divine mind, which knows how to loosen the knots of human affairs, even the most complex and inscrutable." Evangelization is meant to cooperate with this liberating work of the Spirit. The very mystery of the Trinity reminds us that we have been created in the image of that divine communion, and so we cannot achieve fulfillment or salvation purely by our own efforts. From the heart of the Gospel we see the profound connection between evangelization and human advancement, which must necessarily find expression and develop in every work of evangelization. Accepting the first proclamation, which invites us to receive God's love and to love him in return with the very love which is his gift, brings forth in our lives and actions a primary and fundamental response: to desire, seek and protect the good of others. (178)

6. Why does the Pope, and the Catholic Church in general, place so much value on social justice and action(176-185)? How is social action related to the kingdom of God, and how is it related to evangelism?

...no one can demand that religion should be relegated to the inner sanctum of personal life, without influence on societal and national life, without concern for the soundness of civil institutions, without a right to offer an opinion on events affecting society. ...An authentic faith—which is never comfortable or completely personal—always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it. (183)

6 Am I Saved?/In Union with God

Preparation

Watch *The Search*

Episode 6: Am I Saved?

Questions for reflection as you watch the video

How does what Jesus did demonstrate the love of God for us?

Why do some people find it hard to accept his love? What kinds of things keep us from responding to God?

What can we do to accept God's love? What happens to us when we really do?

Readings in *The Joy of the Gospel*

Chapter 4: The Social Dimension of Evangelization part 2 (Paragraphs 186-258)

The Inclusion of the Poor in Society

The Common Good and Peace in Society

Social Dialogue as a Contribution to Peace

Questions for reflection as you read (numbers in parenthesis refer to paragraph numbers)

Our faith in Christ, who became poor, and was always close to the poor and the outcast, is the basis of our concern for the integral development of society's most neglected members. (186)

Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society. (187)

Why are the poor so significant in the experience and imagination of the Church (186-192)? How is concern for the poor connected to our own redemption (193-201)?

What are some ways the Pope exhorts us to work to change social structures for the common good such that the poor and vulnerable find dignity, protection, and opportunity (202-216)? Are there ways you can participate?

What are the four principles that can guide us in “building a people in peace, justice, and fraternity” such that (217-237)? How are these principles really connected to the gospel and what it means for our salvation?

What kind of dialog does Pope Francis envision as necessary necessary to develop peace and further the common good (238-258)?

Scripture

Amos 5.21-24; 8.4-6

Luke 5.1-11

Romans 3.9-18; 5.1-6.11; 12.1-21

Group discussion

Questions for group discussion (numbers in parenthesis refer to paragraph numbers)

1. What does it mean to say “yes” to God and his love? What does God do when we respond in this kind of freedom to his initiative? Do you know him personally as one who loves and saves you?

2. Why is our salvation in Christ so intimately connected to the transformation of all things, including society and the injustice we see in the world (187-192)?

For the Church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one. God shows the poor "his first mercy." This divine preference has consequences for the faith life of all Christians, since we are called to have "this mind... which was in Jesus Christ" (*Phil 2:5*). Inspired by this, the Church has made an option for the poor which is understood as a "special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness." This option—as Benedict XVI has taught—"is implicit in our Christian faith in a God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty." This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the *sensus fidei*, but in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them. The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the centre of the Church's pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them. (198)

3. What does it mean to not just make the poor our concern but to fully enter and transform their suffering redemptively (193-201)? What other vulnerable people should be the special concern of each of each of us and the Church? How does what Christ did through the cross relate to what we do in care for the poor, the vulnerable, the impoverished, and the searching?

4. What does the path to peace really look like in relation to the gospel of Christ (217-237)? Can peace be sought and found, in relationships between persons, cultures, or nations, apart from Christ?

This principle, drawn from the Gospel, reminds us that Christ has made all things one in himself: heaven and earth, God and man, time and eternity, flesh and spirit, person and society. The sign of this unity and reconciliation of all things in him is peace. Christ "is our peace" (*Eph*

2:14). The Gospel message always begins with a greeting of peace, and peace at all times crowns and confirms the relations between the disciples. Peace is possible because the Lord has overcome the world and its constant conflict "by making peace through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20).

5. Relationship between the Church and national and international authorities, between faith, reason, and science, and between traditions within the the Christian faith and between religions is an important part of contributing to peace (238-258). Why? How do we engage in that dialog in the light of the truth of the gospel in fruitful ways that still cultivate its integrity and our evangelistic calling?

The Church proclaims "the Gospel of peace" (Eph 6:15) and she wishes to cooperate with all national and international authorities in safeguarding this immense universal good. By preaching Jesus Christ, who is himself peace (cf. Eph 2:14), the new evangelization calls on every baptized person to be a peacemaker and a credible witness to a reconciled life. (239)

7 Why a Church?/Spirit-Filled Evangelizers

Watch *The Search*

Preparation

Episode 7: Why a Church?

Questions for reflection as you watch the video

What kinds of impressions to people have about the church? What are negative things you have heard (or even said)? What are positive impressions you have witnessed, or had?

What is the church, really? How is it more than our impressions?

Why can't we be "spiritual but not religious?" What does our religious activity as part of the church actually do to help us in our relationship with God?

Readings in *The Joy of the Gospel*

Chapter 5: Spirit-Filled Evangelizers (Paragraphs 259-288)

Reasons for a Renewed Missionary Impulse

Mary, Mother of Evangelization

Questions for reflection as you read (numbers in parenthesis refer to paragraph numbers)

Spirit-filled evangelizers means evangelizers fearlessly open to the working of the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost, the Spirit made the apostles go forth from themselves and turned them into heralds of God's wondrous deeds, capable of speaking to each person in his or her own language. The Holy Spirit also grants the courage to proclaim the newness of the Gospel with boldness (*parrhesía*) in every time and place, even when it meets with opposition. Let us call upon him today, firmly rooted in prayer, for without prayer all our activity risks being fruitless and our message empty. Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God's presence. (259)

What is necessary for us to discover and maintain the zeal of Spirit-filled evangelizers (261-262)?

The primary reason for evangelizing is the love of Jesus which we have received, the experience of salvation which urges us to ever greater love of him. (264)

What does it mean to experience this love of Jesus and the experience of salvation (264-267)? Have you experienced this reality in your own life? If not, what can you do to find it?

Why is it important that we are not just individuals who know God but that we are 'a people' made and sent out by Jesus to his people (268-274)? What happens to us if we remain fixated on our own interior spirituality? What happens when we "live out a spirituality of drawing nearer to others and seeking their welfare" (272)?

What kinds of encouragement does the Pope offer that are rooted in the reality of the risen Christ (275-280)?

What can intercessory prayer and the example and intercession of Mary bring to our efforts to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and faithful to his call to evangelize (281-288)?

Scripture

Acts 2.1-47

2 Corinthians 5.11-21

Group discussion

Questions for group discussion (numbers in parenthesis refer to paragraph numbers)

1. What does the Holy Spirit have to do with evangelism (259-261)? Do we really recognize his presence, power, and commission in our lives? Where do we primarily witness and receive the power of the Holy Spirit?

Spirit-filled evangelizers are evangelizers who pray and work. Mystical notions without a solid social and missionary outreach are of no help to evangelization, nor are dissertations or social or pastoral practices which lack a spirituality which can change hearts. ...What is needed is the ability to cultivate an interior space which can give a Christian meaning to commitment and activity. Without prolonged moments of adoration, of prayerful encounter with the word, of sincere conversation with the Lord, our work easily becomes meaningless; we lose energy as a result of weariness and difficulties, and our fervour dies out. The Church urgently needs the deep breath of prayer, and to my great joy groups devoted to prayer and intercession, the prayerful reading of God's word and the perpetual adoration of the Eucharist are growing at every level of ecclesial life. Even so, "we must reject the temptation to offer a privatized and individualistic spirituality which ill accords with the demands of charity, to say nothing of the implications of the incarnation." There is always the risk that some moments of prayer can become an excuse for not offering one's life in mission; a privatized lifestyle can lead Christians to take refuge in some false forms of spirituality. (262)

2. Why is a privatized and individualistic spirituality not compatible with the demands of charity (262)? What helps us develop an authentic spirituality? What does it look like?

A true missionary, who never ceases to be a disciple, knows that Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him. He senses Jesus alive with him in the midst of the missionary enterprise. Unless we see him present at the heart of our missionary commitment, our enthusiasm soon wanes and we are no longer sure of what it is that we are handing on; we lack vigour and passion. A person who is not convinced, enthusiastic, certain and in love, will convince nobody. (266)

3. What motivates the true missionary spirit in God's people (267)? How best do we express that Spirit with others (268-273)? What do we share that draws others to union with God?

When we live out a spirituality of drawing nearer to others and seeking their welfare, our hearts are opened wide to the Lord's greatest and most beautiful gifts. Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God. Whenever our eyes are opened to acknowledge the other, we grow in the light of faith and knowledge of God. If we want to advance in the spiritual life, then, we must constantly be missionaries. The work of evangelization enriches the mind and the heart; it opens up spiritual horizons; it makes us more and more sensitive to the workings of the Holy Spirit, and it takes us beyond our limited spiritual constructs. A committed missionary knows the joy of being a spring which spills over and refreshes others. Only the person who feels happiness in seeking the good of others, in desiring their happiness, can be a missionary. This openness of the heart is a source of joy, since "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). We do not live better when we flee, hide, refuse to share, stop giving and lock ourselves up in own comforts. Such a life is nothing less than slow suicide. (272)

4. What kinds of things keep us from committing fully to mission (275-277)? What do we need to overcome those limitations?

Let us believe the Gospel when it tells us that the kingdom of God is already present in this world and is growing, here and there, and in different ways: like the small seed which grows into a great tree (cf. *Mt* 13:31-32), like the measure of leaven that makes the dough rise (cf. *Mt* 13:33) and like the good seed that grows amid the weeds (cf. *Mt* 13, 24-30) and can always pleasantly surprise us. The kingdom is here, it returns, it struggles to flourish anew. Christ's resurrection everywhere calls forth seeds of that new world; even if they are cut back, they grow again, for the resurrection is already secretly woven into the fabric of this history, for Jesus did not rise in vain. May we never remain on the sidelines of this march of living hope! (278)

5. What do we see in intercessory prayer and the example of Mary that help shape the way we, as the church, evangelize (281-288)?
