



For parishes

FEBRUARY

“Let us pray that parishes, placing communion at the centre, may increasingly become communities of faith, fraternity and welcome towards those most in need”



PRAYER INTENTION REFLECTION

Instruction

The pastoral conversion

of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church²

Congregation for the Clergy

29 June 2020

27. The subject of the missionary and evangelising action of the Church is always the People of God as a whole. The Code of Canon Law emphasises that the Parish is not identified as a building or a series of structures, but rather as a specific community of the faithful, where the Parish Priest is the proper pastor^[30]. Pope Francis recalled that “the parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration”, and affirmed that it is “a community of communities”^[31].

28. The various components that make up the Parish are called to communion and unity. When each part recognises its complementary role in service of the community, on the one hand, we see the fulfilment of the collaborative ministry of the Parish Priest with his Assistant Priests, while on the other hand, we see how the various charisms of deacons, consecrated men and women and the laity, cooperate in building up the singular body of Christ (cf. 1 Co 12:12).

² See full message:

<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2020/07/20/0391/00886.html#ing>

© Copyright - Libreria Editrice Vaticana



29. The Parish is a community gathered together by the Holy Spirit to announce the Word of God and bring new children of God to birth in the baptismal font. Assembled by the pastor, the Parish celebrates the memorial of the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord, bearing witness to faith in charity, living in a permanent state of mission, whilst ensuring that no one is excluded from the salvific, life-giving message. Pope Francis expressed it thus: "The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelises, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptability, it continues to be "the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters". This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few. [...] We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented"^[32].

30. The "spiritual and ecclesial style of Shrines" – which are true "missionary outposts" in their own right – is not extraneous to the Parish, characterised as they are by their spirit of welcome, their life of prayer and silence that renews the spirit, the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and their care for the poor. Parish pilgrimages to various Shrines are precious instruments that can serve to strengthen fraternal communion, openness and welcome upon return to the Parish^[33].

31. A Shrine, then, is analogous to a Parish in that it encompasses all the characteristics and services that ought to be found in the parish community, as it represents for the faithful the desired goal of their interior searching and a place where they can encounter the merciful face of Christ in a welcoming Church. Frequenting Shrines can help the faithful rediscover their being "anointed by the Holy One" (1 Jn 2:20), that is to say their baptismal consecration. At such places, one learns to celebrate with fervour the mysterious presence of God in the midst his people in the liturgy, in the beauty of the evangelising mission of the baptised, and in the call to exercise charity in daily life^[34].

32. A 'sanctuary' open to all, the Parish, called to reach out to everyone, without exception, should remember that the poor and excluded must always have a privileged place in the heart of the Church. As Pope Benedict XVI affirmed: "The Gospel is addressed in a special way to the poor"^[35]. In addition, as Pope Francis observed "the new evangelisation 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"^[36].

33. Oftentimes, the Parish community is the first place of personal human encounter that the poor have with the face of the Church. Priests, deacons and consecrated men and women are among the first to have compassion for the "wounded flesh"^[37] of their brothers and sisters, to visit the sick, to support the unemployed and their families, thereby opening the door to those in need. With their gaze fixed upon them, the Parish community evangelises and is evangelised by the poor, discovering anew the call to preach the Word in all settings^[38], whilst recalling the "supreme law" of charity, by which we shall all be judged^[39].



APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION
EVANGELII GAUDIUM³
Francesco
24 November 2013

28. The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelizes, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be “the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters”.^[26] This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few. The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration.^[27] In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers.^[28] It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach. We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented.

September 2017:

<https://thepopevideo.org/parishes-at-the-service-of-the-mission/>

³See full message:

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

© Copyright - Libreria Editrice Vaticana