

**Apostolic letter in the form of motu proprio**

# **Ubicumque et Semper 'Always and Everywhere'**

**of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI**

With which is instituted the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization

The Church has the duty to proclaim always and everywhere the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He, the first and supreme evangelizer, on the day of his Ascension to the Father sent the Apostles: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). Faithful to this mandate the Church, people that God acquired to proclaim his wonderful deeds (cf. 1 Peter 2:9), since the day of Pentecost, in which it received as gift the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:14), has never tired of making known to the whole world the beauty of the Gospel, proclaiming Jesus Christ, true God and true man, the same "yesterday, today and for ever" (Acts 13:8), who with his Death and Resurrection brought about salvation, bringing to fulfillment the ancient promise. Hence, the evangelizing mission, continuation of the work desired by the Lord Jesus, is for the Church necessary and irreplaceable, expression of her very nature.

This mission has taken on in history ever new forms and modalities according to the times, the situations and the historical moments. In our time, one of its singular features has been to be confronted with the phenomenon of estrangement from the faith, which has manifested itself progressively in societies and cultures that for centuries seemed permeated by the Gospel. The social transformations we have witnessed in the last decades have complex causes, which sink their roots far in time and that have modified profoundly the perception of our world. Think of the gigantic progress of science and technology, of the expansion of the possibilities of life and the areas of individual liberty, of the profound changes in the economic field, of the process of ethnic and cultural mixes caused by massive migratory phenomena, of the growing interdependence among peoples. All this has not happened without consequences also for the religious dimension of man's life. And if on one hand humanity has known the undeniable benefits of these transformations and the Church has received further stimulation to give reason for the hope that is in her (cf. 1 Peter 3:15), verified on the other hand is a worrying loss of the sense of the sacred, even calling into question those foundations that seem indisputable, such as faith in a creator and provident God, the revelation of Jesus Christ only Savior, and the common understanding of the fundamental experiences of man, such as birth, death, living in a family, and reference to a natural moral law.

Although all this has been greeted by some as a liberation, perceived very quickly is the interior desert that is born where man, wishing to be the only architect of his nature and of his destiny, finds himself deprived of what constitutes the foundation of all things.

Already the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council assumed among its central topics the question of the relationship between the Church and this contemporary world. Following the trail of conciliar teaching, my Predecessors reflected further on the need to find adequate ways to enable our contemporaries to continue to hear the living and eternal Word of the Lord.

With a vision of the future, the Servant of God Paul VI observed that the commitment of evangelization, "as a result of the frequent situations of dechristianization in our day, [...] also proves equally necessary for innumerable people who have been baptized but who live quite outside Christian life, for simple people who have a certain faith but an imperfect knowledge of the foundations of that faith, for intellectuals who feel the need to know Jesus Christ in a light different from the instruction they received as children, and for many others" (apostolic exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi," No. 52). And

with his thought directed to those estranged from the faith, he added that the evangelizing action of the Church "must constantly seek the proper means and language for presenting, or representing, to them God's revelation and faith in Jesus Christ" (ibid., No. 56).

The Venerable Servant of God John Paul II made this difficult task one of the cardinal points of his vast magisterium, synthesizing in the concept "new evangelization" -- which he systematically analyzed in numerous interventions -- the task that awaits the Church today, in particular in the areas of ancient Christianization. A task that, although it refers directly to its way of relating to the exterior, presupposes, however first of all a constant interior renewal, a continuous passing, so to speak, from evangelized to evangelizing. Suffice it to recall what was affirmed in the postsynodal exhortation "Christifideles Laici": "Whole countries and nations where religion and the Christian life were formerly flourishing and capable of fostering a viable and working community of faith, are now put to a hard test, and in some cases, are even undergoing a radical transformation, as a result of a constant spreading of an indifference to religion, of secularism and atheism. This particularly concerns countries and nations of the so-called First World, in which economic well-being and consumerism, even if coexistent with a tragic situation of poverty and misery, inspires and sustains a life lived 'as if God did not exist'. This indifference to religion and the practice of religion devoid of true meaning in the face of life's very serious problems, are not less worrying and upsetting when compared with declared atheism. Sometimes the Christian faith as well, while maintaining some of the externals of its tradition and rituals, tends to be separated from those moments of human existence which have the most significance, such as, birth, suffering and death. [...]

"On the other hand, in other regions or nations many vital traditions of piety and popular forms of Christian religion are still conserved; but today this moral and spiritual patrimony runs the risk of being dispersed under the impact of a multiplicity of processes, including secularization and the spread of sects. Only a re-evangelization can assure the growth of a clear and deep faith, and serve to make these traditions a force for authentic freedom.

**"Without doubt a mending of the Christian fabric of society is urgently needed in all parts of the world. But for this to come about what is needed is to first remake the Christian fabric of the ecclesial community itself present in these countries and nations" (No. 34).**

Assuming, therefore, the concern of my venerable Predecessors, I consider it opportune to offer adequate answers so that the whole Church, allowing herself to be regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, present herself to the contemporary world with a missionary thrust capable of promoting a new evangelization. The latter makes reference above all to the Churches of ancient foundation, which however, live very different realities, to which different needs correspond, which await different impulses of evangelization: in some territories, in fact, despite the advance of the phenomenon of secularization, Christian practice still manifests a healthy vitality and a profound rooting in the soul of entire populations; noted in other regions, instead, is a distancing of the whole society from the faith, with a weaker ecclesial fabric, though not deprived of elements of liveliness that the Spirit does not fail to arouse; we also know, unfortunately, of areas that seem completely de-Christianized, in which the light of the faith is entrusted to the witness of small communities: these lands, which need a renewed first proclamation of the Gospel, seem to be particularly resistant to many aspects of the Christian message.

The diversity of situations calls for careful discernment: to speak of "new evangelization" does not mean, in fact, to have to elaborate a single equal formula for all the circumstances. And yet, it is not difficult to realize what all the Churches need that live in traditionally Christian territories, which is a renewed missionary drive, expression of a new generous openness to the gift of grace. In fact, we cannot forget that the first task is to be docile to the gratuitous work of the Spirit of the Risen One, which supports all those who are bearers of the Gospel, and which opens the hearts of those who listen. Necessary above all to proclaim profoundly the Word of the Gospel is a profound experience of God.

As I stated in my first encyclical "Deus Caritas Est": "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction" (No. 1). In a similar way, at the root of all evangelization there is not a human plan of expansion, but the desire to share the inestimable gift that God has willed to give us, making us sharers in his own life.

Therefore, in the light of these reflections, after having examined everything carefully and having asked for the judgment of expert persons, I establish and decree what follows:

#### Art. 1

Paragraph 1. The Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization is established as a Dicastery of the Roman Curia, in the sense of the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*.

Paragraph 2. The Council pursues its own end both by stimulating reflection on topics of the new evangelization, as well as singling out and promoting the adequate ways and instruments to accomplish it.

#### Art. 2

The Council's action, which is carried out in collaboration with the other Dicasteries and Organisms of the Roman Curia, in respect of their relative competencies, is at the service of the particular Churches, especially in those territories of Christian tradition where greater evidence is manifested of the phenomenon of secularization.

#### Art. 3

Pointed out among the specific tasks of the Council are:

1st. to reflect on the theological and pastoral meaning of the new evangelization;

2nd. to promote and foster, in close collaboration with the Episcopal Conferences concerned, which can have an ad hoc organism, the study, diffusion and realization of the papal Magisterium related to topics connected with the new evangelization;

3rd. to make known initiatives linked to the new evangelization already under way in the various particular Churches and to promote their new realization, involving actively also the resources present in the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, as well as the aggregations of faithful and in the new communities;

4th. to study and foster the use of modern forms of communication, as instruments for the new evangelization;

5th. to promote the use of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, as essential and complete formulation of the content of the faith for the men of our time.

#### Art. 4.

Paragraph 1. The Council is headed by an Archbishop President, helped by his Secretary, by an Under-Secretary and by an appropriate number of Officials, according to the norms established by the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* and by the General Regulation of the Roman Curia.

Paragraph 2. The Council will have its own Members and can have its own Consultors. All that has been deliberated with the present *Motu proprio*, I order that it have full and stable value,

despite anything to the contrary, even if it is worthy of particular mention, and I establish that it be promulgated through publication in the newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* and that it come into force on the day of promulgation.

Given at Castel Gandolfo, the 21st day of September of 2010, Feast of Saint Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist, sixth year of my Pontificate.

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

[Translation by ZENIT]