

Frank Padilla's insights: *To be a Christian is to be an evangelizer! This we affirm in CFC-FFL, which is an evangelistic and missionary community. We have enshrined this as one of our 7 Core Values – "#2 Evangelistic and Missionary".*

To evangelize is to proclaim Christ and the gospel of Christ. It is not just to love others. If for example we help the poor but do not tell them we are doing it because of our love for God and neighbor, then we have not proclaimed Christ. Then we have missed a great opportunity to evangelize. The poor will be thankful and even extol the giver, but will miss out on the opportunity to have a dramatic encounter with Christ. Some say we should just walk the talk. Indeed we must walk our talk, but first we must talk our talk.

Every person has the right to hear the gospel, and this means we have the responsibility to proclaim it. If we do good but do not proclaim Christ, then we would have failed in our responsibility. Then we would have deprived the other of the privilege of hearing the gospel. Jesus says that if we do not gather, then we scatter.

If we want to do good for others including the poor but do not proclaim Christ, then we become just a social agency. We would still do good work, but we would no longer do work as the Christian community that CFC is. The ultimate fulfillment for the human person, the true restoration of one's dignity, the true liberation, is not only in having one's material needs met, but also and more especially in knowing God and having faith in Christ.

We are called to share our resources or our goods with others. This is not just material goods, but more especially the gift of faith in Christ.

A Christian is someone who loves. The hallmark of a Christian is love. Love is not just in helping provide for the material needs of others, especially the poor, but consists in proclaiming the truth of Christ, who is the Savior. Christ it is who provides true liberation, not just from material poverty but from spiritual poverty. We have a great witness of love in our work with the poor. But that witness must be explained, so that it points not to us but to Christ, so that it gives glory where it belongs--to Jesus.

Are we Christians? Then our first service and our basic obligation is to proclaim the gospel, and that means to proclaim Christ.

God bless.

Summary of Doctrinal Note on Evangelization

"The Missionary Mandate Belongs to the Very Nature of the Church"

(Vatican City, December 14, 2007 by *Zenith.org*)

Executive Summary

I. Introduction

1. The *Doctrinal Note* is devoted principally to an exposition of the Catholic Church's understanding of **the Christian mission of evangelization, which is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ**; the word "Gospel" translates "evangelion" in the Greek New Testament. "Jesus Christ was sent by the Father to proclaim the Gospel, calling all people to conversion and faith. 'Go out into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature' (Mk 16,15)." [n. 1]

2. The *Doctrinal Note* cites Pope John Paul II's Encyclical Letter "The Mission of the Redeemer" in recalling that "**Every person has the right to hear the Good News [Gospel]** of the God who reveals and gives

himself in Christ, so that each one can live out in its fullness his or her proper calling.' **This right implies the corresponding duty to evangelize.** " [n. 2]

3. **Today there is "a growing confusion" about the Church's missionary mandate. Some think "that any attempt to convince others on religious matters is a limitation of their freedom," suggesting that it is enough to invite people "to act according to their consciences", or to "become more human or more faithful to their own religion", or "to build communities which strive for justice, freedom, peace and solidarity", without aiming at their conversion to Christ and to the Catholic faith.**

Others have argued that conversion to Christ should not be promoted because it is possible for people to be saved without explicit faith in Christ or formal incorporation in the Church. Because "of these problems, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has judged it necessary to public the present *Note*." [n. 3]

II. Some Anthropological Implications

4. While some forms of agnosticism and relativism deny the human capacity for truth, in fact human freedom cannot be separated from its reference to truth. Human beings are given intellect and will by God that they might come to know and love what is true and good. **The ultimate fulfillment of the vocation of the human person is found in accepting the revelation of God in Christ as proclaimed by the Church.**

5. This search for truth cannot be accomplished entirely on one's own, but inevitably involves help from others and trust in knowledge that one receives from others. Thus, teaching and entering into dialogue to lead someone in freedom to know and to love Christ is not inappropriate encroachment on human freedom, **"but rather a legitimate endeavor and a service capable of making human relationships more fruitful."** [n. 5]

6. The communication of truths so that they might be accepted by others is also in harmony with the natural human desire to **have others share in one's own goods, which for Catholics includes the gift of faith in Jesus Christ.** Members of the Church naturally desire to share with others the faith that has been freely given to them.

7. Through evangelization, cultures are positively affected by the truth of the Gospel. Likewise, through evangelization, members of the Catholic Church open themselves to receiving the gifts of other traditions and cultures, for "Every encounter with another person or culture is capable of revealing potentialities of the Gospel which hitherto may not have been fully explicit and which will enrich the life of Christians and the Church." [n. 6]

8. Any approach to dialogue such as coercion or improper enticement that fails to respect the dignity and religious freedom of the partners in that dialogue has no place in Christian evangelization.

III. Some Ecclesiological Implications

9. "Since the day of Pentecost ... the Gospel, in the power of the Holy Spirit, is proclaimed to all people so that they might believe and become disciples of Christ and members of his Church." "Conversion" is a "change in thinking and of acting," expressing our new life in Christ; it is an ongoing dimension of Christian life.

10. For Christian evangelization, "the incorporation of new members into the Church is not the expansion of a power-group, but rather entrance into the network of friendship with Christ which connects heaven and earth, different continents and ages." In this sense, then, "the Church is the bearer of the presence of God and thus the instrument of the true humanization of man and the world." (n. 9)

11. The *Doctrinal Note* cites the Second Vatican Council's "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" (*Gaudium et Spes*) to say that respect for religious freedom and its promotion "must not in any way make us indifferent towards truth and goodness. Indeed, **love impels the followers of Christ to proclaim to all the truth which saves.**" [n.10] This mission of love must be accomplished by both proclamation of the word and witness of life. "Above all, the witness of holiness is necessary, if the light of

truth is to reach all human beings. If the word is contradicted by behavior, its acceptance will be difficult." On the other hand, citing Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, the Note says that **"even the finest witness will prove ineffective in the long run, if it is not explained, justified... and made explicit by a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus."** [n. 11]

IV. Some Ecumenical Implications

12. The CDF document points out the important role of ecumenism in the Church's mission of evangelization. Christian divisions can seriously compromise the credibility of the Church's evangelizing mission. The more ecumenism brings about greater unity among Christians, the more effective evangelization will be.

13. When Catholic evangelization takes place in a country where other Christians live, Catholics must take care to carry out their mission with "both true respect for the tradition and spiritual riches of such countries as well as a sincere spirit of cooperation." Evangelization proceeds by dialogue, not proselytism. With non-Catholic Christians, Catholics must enter into a respectful dialogue of charity and truth, a dialogue which is not only an exchange of ideals, but also of gifts, in order that the fullness of the means of salvation can be offered to one's partners in dialogue. In this way, they are led to an ever deeper conversion to Christ.

"In this connection, it needs also to be recalled that if a non-Catholic Christian, for reasons of conscience and having been convinced of Catholic truth, asks to enter into the full communion of the Catholic Church, this is to be respected as the work of the Holy Spirit and as an expression of freedom of conscience and of religion. In such a case, it would not be question of proselytism in the negative sense that has been attributed to this term." [n. 12]

V. Conclusion

14. The *Doctrinal Note* recalls that the missionary mandate belongs to the very nature of the Church. In this regard it cites Pope Benedict XVI: **"The proclamation of and witness to the Gospel are the first service that Christians can render to every person and the entire human race, called as they are to communicate to all God's love, which was fully manifested in Jesus Christ, the one Redeemer of the world."** Its concluding sentence contains a quotation from Pope Benedict's first Encyclical Letter **"Deus caritas est"**: "The love which comes from God unites us to him and 'makes us a *we* which transcends our divisions and makes us one, until in the end God is *all in all* (1 Cor 15:28)'.