

## GO OUT INTO THE DEEP WITH THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT: THE TASK OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

Third talk to the Charismatic Conference in Peoria, Ill  
Mother Adela, Foundress SCTJM  
July 2011

---

Bl. John Paul II in his 1990 Encyclical on evangelization, *Redemptoris Missio*, told us: "The mission of Christ the Redeemer, which is entrusted to the Church, is still very far from completion. As the second millennium after Christ's coming draws to an end, an overall view of the human race shows that this mission is still only beginning and that we must commit ourselves wholeheartedly to its service. **It is the Spirit who impels us to proclaim the great works of God: 'For if I preach the Gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!'** (1 Cor 9: 16)" (RM no. 1)



The mission of Christ the Redeemer, which is entrusted to the Church, is still very far from completion, actually, said, Bl. John Paul in the same Encyclical, "it seems that at the end of the second millennium an overall view of the human race shows that this mission of evangelization is still only beginning (and it has become an urgent and primary mission for the Church) and that we must commit ourselves wholeheartedly to its service. It is the Spirit who impels us to proclaim the great works of God: "For if I preach the Gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (1 Cor 9: 16). (RM no. 1)

John Paul II invited the whole Church to renew our apostolic zeal, our missionary commitment, our dedication to the New Evangelization, for this mission is an urgent task given by the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the III millennium. This urgent call to the pressing mission of the New Evangelization is a great gift in the life of the Church and it is also a great task and a great responsibility for the Church, for we are to announce the truth of the Gospel today, in the midst of opposition and persecution.

Why is this task to the New Evangelization a gift for the Church? --because when the zeal for evangelization is renewed in the Church, when the challenges of today press us to announce the Gospel, to be witnesses of its power, the Church is strengthened and revitalized in her faith, in her identity, and in her mission; it is given a new grace of Pentecost that enflames a new power, a new ardor, a new joy and a renewed direction for her efforts... Go out into the deep and cast the net! *Faith is strengthened when it is given to others!* As this mission is a gift, it is also a necessary task, because the challenges of today's world are demanding from all of us a missionary commitment *to be ardent witnesses to the Gospel, witnesses to Christ*, who is the truth, the way and the life of each human person, of each family, of each society, and of each nation, of the whole world.

### The task given to us at the Beginning of the III Millennium

In the Apostolic Letter, "**At the Beginning of the Third Millennium**", given to us on Jan 6, 2001, Bl. John Paul II cried out to the whole Church calling us to "**go out into the deep**". As he pointed: "At the beginning of the new millennium, a new stage of the Church's journey begins, our hearts ring out with the words of Jesus when one day, after speaking to the crowds from Simon's boat, he invited the Apostle to "put out into the deep" for a catch: "Duc in altum" (Lk 5:4). Peter and his first companions trusted Christ's words, and cast the nets. "When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish" (Lk 5:6). (no. 1)

The greatest challenge facing the Church today is the task which has always been entrusted to her, and it has always been her joy and her challenge: evangelization.

It is the duty of the Church to proclaim always and everywhere the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church is called in every epoch, and therefore in our own, to embrace anew, with a renewed commitment, with a renewed power from on high, the missionary mandate of the Risen Christ before His Ascension: "*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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.*" (Matthew 28:19-20). And knowing that this mission is always found with opposition and persecution: Jesus also tells us in the Gospel of St. John: "*Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me*" (Jn 14: 1) *In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world.*" (Jn 16: 33).

#### **THE NATURE AND VOCATION OF THE CHURCH: TO MAKE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST**

"*Making disciples*" is at the very heart of Church's ongoing vocation and mission. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in his Apostolic Letter establishing in 2010 the Pontifical Council to promote the New Evangelization told us:

*"The Church, founded by Christ, is sent to evangelize the world; it lives in a permanent state of mission and finds its very reason for being in that mission. Faithful to this mandate, the Church—a people chosen by God to declare his wonderful deeds (cf. 1 Peter 2:9)—ever since she received the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:14), has never tired of making known to the whole world the beauty of the Gospel as she preaches Jesus Christ, true God and true man, the same "yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8) Hence the mission of evangelization, a continuation of the work desired by the Lord Jesus, is necessary for the Church: it cannot be overlooked; it is an expression of her very nature"*.

Paul VI, in his Apostolic Exhortation: *Evangelii Nuntianti, given December 8, 1975 (we should note that it was given after his meeting with the Charismatic renewal in Rome the same year)* reminded us of the truth of the essence and vocation of the Church: "*We wish to confirm once more that **the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church.** It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent. Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection"... (EN no. 14) to make present the redeeming and salvific power of Christ through the sacraments, and to teach the path of salvation. To evangelize is for the Church a necessity, an unchangeable task, an irreplaceable mission, is a visible expression of her own nature, it is her deepest joy.*

*It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent* because as Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has told us, the expanding and increasing process of secularization and an authentic "dictatorship of relativism" have produced a tremendous absence of values in many of the men and women of our time, and many nations that were once Christian have been seduced by this secularism that has brought an alarming erosion of faith, a type of "silent apostasy" (John Paul II, *Ecclesia en Europa*, n. 9) and a "strange forgetfulness of God" (Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, *World Youth Day 2005*): an eclipse of God in our contemporary world.

#### **Eclipse of God**

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has enumerated in a simple way, the ways in which this "eclipse of God" has taken place in our contemporary world:

- In our own time, it has been particularly challenged by an abandonment of the faith—a phenomenon progressively more manifested in societies and cultures which for centuries seemed to be permeated by the Gospel.
- A profound crisis in the meaning of our Christian faith and of belonging to the Church.
- The social changes we have witnessed in recent decades have profoundly altered our way of looking at the world: like advances in science and technology, the profound changes in the economic sphere... an increasing interdependence of peoples.
- a troubling loss of the sense of the sacred and of the sense of sin.
- a loss in the capacity to listen and understand the words of the Gospel as a living and life giving message.
- like never before foundations once deemed unshakeable are called into question such as faith in a provident creator God, the revelation of Jesus Christ as the one Savior, and a common understanding of basic human experiences: i.e., birth, death, life in a family, and reference to a natural moral law.
- A spreading of an indifference to religion, of secularism and atheism. Many living and acting like if there is no God.... Like God is irrelevant to our lives and choices, to the making of laws.
- In Cologne, Pope Emeritus told the youth: *"A new paganism is present, and it is not enough just to maintain the community of believers, although this is very important. (...) I believe that together we must find new ways of bringing the Gospel to today's world by preaching Christ anew and by establishing the faith."*

Alexander Men, a Russian priest assassinated in 1990, remarked provocatively during the years of religious persecution that the greatest enemy of Christians was not the militant atheism of the Soviet state, but rather the pseudo-Christianity of so many baptized persons. These words jar our consciences. In the final analysis, the true and greatest enemy of the Christian is mediocrity and resistance to true faith in the Gospel.

This is the reason why Bl. John Paul II made this urgent task of the New Evangelization a central point of his pontificate, and our present Holy Father continues with the same urgency to call us to this task, because it is directed to the regions of the world that were Christianized long ago, have known Christ, the Gospel, the teachings of the Church... and have renounced to it, or become indifferent. So, the Church today has dimensions of the same mission of Evangelization: in reality just one single movement of the Spirit, as *two oars that move the boat into the deep of the ocean of the history of the III Millennium: to announce Christ and his truth, the New Evangelization, to those who were Christians and have lost the sense of their discipleship, or to those who have renounced their Christian way of living, and have been seduced by secularism and relativism, and have renounced their commitment to the Gospel... and then, at the same time, to proclaim Christ as the Redeemer of man and of the world to those who have never heard the Gospel: for them, it is a First Evangelization.*

In truth, the globalized world has become a gigantic mission territory. *One of the greatest obstacles to the work of evangelization has always been routine or habit, which eliminates the freshness and persuasive power of Christian missionary outreach and witness.* We must renounce to all that in us is an obstacle to the urgent call of the Church. We cannot wait for those no longer practicing the faith to return to the Church on their own, we need to seek them out. We must not hesitate to reach out by taking to the streets and city squares, to the public sphere, entering supermarkets, banks, schools and universities and wherever people can be found: wherever a human person is, the task of the new evangelization must be fulfilled. Our missionary zeal, enflamed by the fire of the Spirit, must carry us "to the ends of the earth." It is more urgent than ever today to have this zeal and to direct our efforts, courageously and naturally to preach Christ and His Gospel in the **great modern areopagus of our world: the new scenarios of our modern world, the old and the new places where it is so needed to**

*courageously and decisively, proclaim the power and the splendor of witness to the Gospel. We need particularly in our time to enter "into the ends of the earth" of the scenarios of : culture, science and technology, economy, politics and the mass media.*

Brothers and sisters, the evangelical harvest is great and the laborers are few (cf. Matthew 9:37) but with the power of the Holy Spirit, even if we are few, we can, as the apostles were able to by the anointing of the Spirit, plant the seed in all the fields of the world, beginning with your own families, places of work, media, political spheres, science, technology, schools, university, hospitals, the impoverished areas, business, ... In all the structures and fields of the world... this is particularly, not exclusively, the mission of the lay people. To "rebuild the ruins of our civilization"... the lay people are the laborers of society, the ones that build the secular world but impregnated with the spirit of the Gospel, they help to transform it into the kingdom of God. *"The lay faithful, in virtue of their participation in the prophetic mission of Christ, are fully part of this work of the Church. Their responsibility, in particular, is to testify how the Christian faith constitutes the only fully valid response to the problems and hopes that life poses to every person and society. This will be possible if the lay faithful will know how to overcome in themselves the separation of the Gospel from life, to again take up in their daily activities in family, work and society, an integrated approach to life that is fully brought about by the inspiration and strength of the Gospel."* (Christifidelis Laici, n. 34)

The great and wide field of action for the Church that is the responsibility of bishops, priests, religious and of all the lay faithful, requires a total openness to the spirit, a radical change in our hearts and lives (conversion), a piercing wisdom and discernment, a serious and deep formation in the faith we profess, an authentic new awakening of commitment in everyone, a new disposition to embrace the missionary calling of the Church: the New Evangelization... we must move forward, there is no time for mediocrity or sloth!... With new ardor, new fire, new methods, new desire for holiness, renewed and strong solid formation, new zeal to be authentic and coherent witnesses to Christ, to his Gospel, to the Splendor of the Church... *We must receive new power from on High to go out into the deep with new courage, new joy, new commitment, renewed convictions, and firmly rooted in faith as St. Paul tells us in Col 2: 7 and always ready to give witness to the hope that is in us as St. Peter tells us in his first letter 3:15 and living true love which is the bond of perfection (Col 3, 14).*

#### **THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS RAISED UP NEW MOVEMENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH FOR THE TASK OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION**

*"The moment has come to commit all of the Church's energies to a new evangelization. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ and His Gospel to all peoples" (JP II, 1990)*

*Once again the Father has fulfilled his promise, said John Paul, once again He has sent the Advocate, the Paraclete, once again the Spirit has intervened in the history of the Church, raising up new charisms, new ecclesial realities which have been called ecclesial movements, one of which that has spread in an unexplainable manner, in all continents and all over the world... like fire: is the Charismatic Renewal. These ecclesial movements, as the Holy Father explained, possess an extraordinary missionary dynamism which responds in an opportune way to the challenges of our time, great and dramatic as they are; they contain a precious evangelizing potential urgently needed by the Church today" (John Paul II, To Members of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, June 5, 1998.) Bl. John Paul II, who followed these new ecclesial realities with particular attention and pastoral care, affirmed: "One of the Spirit's gifts to our time is truly the flourishing of the ecclesial movements which, from the beginning of my pontificate, I have seen and continue to see as a reason for hope for the Church and for society." (John Paul II, Homily at Vigil of Pentecost, May 31, 1996, No. 7.) The Pope was deeply convinced that these ecclesial movements were a manifestation of a "new missionary advent," of a great "Christian*

**springtime**" prepared by God at the threshold of the third millennium of the Redemption. *"The ecclesial movements are the answer which has been raised up by the Holy Spirit to this dramatic challenge at the end of the millennium. You are this providential answer!"* (John Paul II, To Members of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, June 5, 1998.) *This was a very prophetic exclamation of John Paul II's pontificate.*

#### **"YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER TO BE MY WITNESSES" ACTS 1, 8**

In the same passage from Acts 1, in which Jesus asked the apostles to remain in Jerusalem and to wait for the promise of the Father, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, to be sent, Jesus also told them: *"you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

#### **Pope Paul VI's apostolic exhortation Evangeli*i Nuntiandi* (On Evangelization in the Modern World).**

"Evangelization will never be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit descends on Jesus of Nazareth at the moment of His baptism when the voice of the Father- "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased"[107]- manifests in an external way the election of Jesus and His mission. Jesus is "led by the Spirit" to experience in the desert the decisive combat and the supreme test before beginning this mission.[108] It is "in the power of the Spirit"[109] that He returns to Galilee and begins His preaching at Nazareth, applying to Himself the passage of Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." And He proclaims: "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled." [110] To the disciples whom He was about to send forth He says, breathing on them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." [111]

In fact, *it is only after the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost that the apostles depart to all the ends of the earth in order to begin the great work of the Church's evangelization.* Peter explains this event as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel: "I will pour out my spirit." [112] Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit so that he can speak to the people about Jesus, the Son of God. [113] Paul too is filled with the Holy Spirit [114] before dedicating himself to his apostolic ministry, as is Stephen when he is chosen for the ministry of service and later on for the witness of blood. The Spirit, who causes Peter, Paul and the Twelve to speak, and who inspires the words that they are to utter, also comes down "on those who heard the word." (n. 75)

It is in the "consolation of the Holy Spirit" that the Church increases. The Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church. It is He who explains to the faithful the deep meaning of the teaching of Jesus and of His mystery. It is the Holy Spirit who, today just as at the beginning of the Church, acts in every evangelizer who allows himself to be possessed and led by Him. The Holy Spirit places on his lips the words which he could not find by himself, and at the same time the Holy Spirit predisposes the soul of the hearer to be open and receptive to the Good News and to the kingdom being proclaimed.

Techniques of evangelization are good, but even the most advanced ones could not replace the gentle action of the Spirit. The most perfect preparation of the evangelizer has no effect without the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit the most convincing speeches or words have no power over the heart of man. Without Him the most highly developed schemas resting on a sociological or psychological basis are quickly seen to be quite valueless.

*We live in the Church at a privileged moment of the Spirit.* Everywhere people are trying to know Him better, as the Scripture reveals Him. They are happy to place themselves under His inspiration. They are gathering about Him; they want to let themselves be led by Him. Now if the Spirit of God has a preeminent place in the whole life of the Church, *it is in her evangelizing mission that He is most active.* It is not by chance that the great inauguration of evangelization took place on the morning of Pentecost, under the inspiration of the Spirit.

***It must be said that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization: it is He who impels each individual to proclaim the Gospel, and it is He who in the depths of the human heart causes the word of salvation to be accepted and understood. But it can equally be said that He is the goal of evangelization:*** He alone stirs up the new creation, the new humanity of which evangelization is to be the result, with that unity in variety which evangelization wishes to achieve within the Christian community. Through the Holy Spirit the Gospel penetrates to the heart of the world, for it is He who causes people to discern the signs of the times- signs willed by God- which evangelization reveals and puts to use within history. We must pray unceasingly for the miracle of Pentecost to be manifested, empowering us, inspiring us, to respond to the great task placed in the Church of this III millennium: the New Evangelization! We need the wind of the Spirit to blow, moving the boat of the Church, as we are to respond to the call to go out into the deep.

#### **DUC IN ALTUM!**

**In his apostolic letter Novo Millennium Ineunte, where the calling to go out into the deep of the ocean of the world with a deep and urgent mission of evangelization, Bl John Paul concluded with this powerful words that we find in number 58:**

*Let us go forward in hope! A new millennium is opening before the Church like a vast ocean upon which we shall venture, relying on the help of Christ. The Son of God, who became incarnate two thousand years ago out of love for humanity, is at work even today: **we need discerning eyes to see this and, above all, a generous heart to become the instruments of his work.** Did we not celebrate the Jubilee Year in order to refresh our contact with this living source of our hope? Now, the Christ whom we have contemplated and loved bids us to set out once more on our journey: "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" (Mt 28:19). **The missionary mandate accompanies us into the Third Millennium and urges us to share the enthusiasm of the very first Christians: we can count on the power of the same Spirit who was poured out at Pentecost and who impels us still today to start out anew, sustained by the hope "which does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5).***

*At the beginning of this new century, **our steps must quicken as we travel the highways of the world.** Many are the paths on which each one of us and each of our Churches must travel, but there is no distance between those who are united in the same communion, the communion which is daily nourished at the table of the Eucharistic Bread and the Word of Life. Every Sunday, the Risen Christ asks us to meet him as it were once more in the Upper Room where, on the evening of "the first day of the week" (Jn 20:19) he appeared to his disciples in order to **"breathe" on them his life-giving Spirit and launch them on the great adventure of proclaiming the Gospel**".*

***Bl. John Paul continues saying: "On this journey we are accompanied by the Blessed Virgin Mary to whom, in the presence of a great number of Bishops assembled in Rome from all parts of the world, I entrusted the Third Millennium. During this year I have often invoked her as the "Star of the New Evangelization".*** Now I point to Mary once again as *the radiant dawn and sure guide for our steps.* Once more, echoing the words of Jesus himself and giving voice to the filial affection of the whole Church, I say to her: *"Woman, behold your children"*(cf. Jn 19:26).

And then in n. 59, he called us: "If your pilgrimage and experience of God, the contemplation of the face of Christ, of the power of His Spirit *has been genuine, it will have as it were stretched our legs for the journey still ahead. We need to imitate the zeal of the Apostle Paul: "Straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:13-14).*

Together, we must all imitate the contemplation of Mary, who returned home to Nazareth from her pilgrimage to the Holy City of Jerusalem, treasuring in her heart the mystery of her Son (cf. *Lk 2:51*).

As John Paul II exhorted the Church at the beginning of the third millennium: "*I have often repeated the call for a new evangelization during these years. I repeat it again in order to emphasize that we must renew that original impulse and allow ourselves to be filled with the zeal of the apostolic preaching after Pentecost. We must awaken in ourselves those sentiments of St. Paul who exclaimed: "Woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel!" (1Corinthians 9:16).*(NMI, n. 40) Let us go, let us go out into the deep with the power of the Holy Spirit.

*Return to Main Page of Teachings of Mother Adela, Foundress SCTJM...*