

# Proclaim'15

building missionary parishes



## COMPANION FOR THE JOURNEY

"With Christ joy is constantly born anew... I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark on a new chapter of evangelisation marked with this joy, while pointing out new paths for the Church's journey in years to come." (*Evangelii Gaudium* 1). These words of Pope Francis are addressed to us all. Through the Proclaim '15 initiative, we are invited to respond generously to the Holy Father's request to make a new beginning in support of the building of missionary parishes. This ongoing missionary task takes us on an exciting, inspiring and, at times, challenging journey with the Lord. The Proclaim '15 resources provided have been produced as a **companion** to support you in the confident sharing of the joy of the Gospel, in your own way, at your own pace, according to the individual needs of your parish and community.

### CHRIST at the CENTRE

"...someone who listens and does nothing is like the man who built a house on soil, with no foundations; as soon as the river bore down on it, it collapsed; and what a ruin that house became!" Luke 6: 49  
These challenging words speak directly to those seeking to evangelise effectively. The Scriptures teach us again and again that Christ must be the source of all our endeavours if we are to successfully build local missionary communities and parishes. The parish missionary journey is always a movement for and with Christ – from him and to him.

## How to use this resource

This resource was produced as a fruit of the **Proclaim '15 National Catholic Evangelisation Conference** in Birmingham on 11 July 2015. It captures key ideas, practical tips and learning taken from workshops that were delivered on the day to enable your local Catholic community to take new steps in service of parish mission. There are eleven packs in total, each offering insights and tips from a particular workshop. You are invited to explore the workshop topics, reflect how these will be beneficial to your parish and then consider the following:

- **Share this information with others in your parish - you are welcome to photocopy all the materials provided here**
- **Say the Proclaim '15 prayer together**
- **Choose one or two of the topics provided as a focus for your parish's mission**
- **Read and discuss the *Learning from Pope Francis* text provided in each pack**
- **Decide some new steps that you will take locally in response to what you read.**



# PRAYER

## Your Constant Companion



### Food and Fuel for the Journey

Throughout Jesus's public ministry we observe that prayer was central to his life and mission. He frequently withdrew to pray. He taught his disciples how to pray, so that they would not only experience God's love and mercy, but would be fed spiritually for the great work of evangelisation that was being asked of them. Two thousand years on, it is the same for us today. We are also invited to recommit to the life of prayer as food and fuel for our journey with the Lord, and so become missionary disciples. This theme is repeated in all the Proclaim '15 resources.

### Start with Prayer

It is no coincidence that Cardinal Vincent Nichols (Westminster) made prioritising prayer a central theme of his keynote address at the Proclaim '15 National Catholic Evangelisation Conference, saying: "To understand our mission then we have to go to the heart of God, the very mystery of the Holy Trinity, the inner life of God. This is spoken of as the Divine *'communio'* – the sharing within the mystery of the persons of God of divine life, love, truth, goodness and beauty. Only from within that inner heart of God does our mission arise. Only from that inner heart of God does our mission find its shape, its purpose, its energy. We are to do something beautiful; something that is of God; something that is for God. So, our mission always starts in our prayer, flows from prayer, from our daily openness to the great mystery of the life of God. It cannot start anywhere else."

Proclaim '15 Conference, 11 July 2015

### Pray Before You Do

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) we read: "The Gospel according to St Luke emphasises the action of the Holy Spirit and the meaning of prayer in Christ's ministry. Jesus prays before the decisive moments of his mission: before his Father's witness to him during his Baptism and Transfiguration, and before his own fulfillment of the Father's plan of love by his Passion. He also prays before the decisive moments involving the mission of his apostles: at his election and call of the Twelve, before Peter's confession of him as 'the Christ of God,' and again that the faith of the chief of the Apostles may not fail when tempted. Jesus' prayer before the events of salvation that the Father has asked him to fulfill is a humble and trusting commitment of his human will to the loving will of the Father." (CCC 2600)

### Proclaim Prayer

**Please join Catholics all over England and Wales in making a humble and trusting commitment to the Lord by saying the Proclaim '15 prayer for the building of missionary parishes:**

**Loving Father,  
you so loved the world that you sent us  
your only Son, that we might believe in  
him and have eternal life.**

**May we encounter Jesus Christ anew this  
day and live the Good News with joy.**

**Through the power of your Holy Spirit,  
help us to "go out to the whole world and  
proclaim" our faith with confidence.**

**Give us the courage to witness to the Joy  
of the Gospel by our words and actions.**

**Help our parish to become more  
welcoming and missionary, so that you  
may be known and loved by all people.**

**We make this prayer through Our Lord  
Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns  
with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for  
ever and ever, Amen.**

**Our Lady, Star of the New Evangelisation,  
Pray for us.**

**Blessed John Henry Newman, Pray for us.  
St Thérèse of Lisieux, Pray for us.**

**Be persevering in your prayers  
and be thankful as you stay  
awake and pray.**

Colossians 4:2

## KEYS TO BECOMING A MISSIONARY PARISH

**Key** CALLED AND CHOSEN

Remember that God has called and chosen you to share the Good News of the Gospel. He is inviting you every day to be renewed through a personal encounter with his Son, Jesus Christ.

**Key** ALWAYS PRAY

Prayer should underpin the start, middle and end points of your missionary efforts. Prayer will sustain you throughout your journey.

**Key** GOD IS PRESENT

Your journey to becoming a missionary parish is not a search for Jesus; you are being called to walk alongside him. He is already here. Everywhere. All the time. He is your constant companion.

**Key** SHARE THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

The Gospel is the Word of the Lord. Be mindful of, and respect it, at all times. Read the Gospel, reflect upon it and be confident in sharing it joyfully with others.

**Key** INVITE OTHERS ON THE JOURNEY

Be open to everyone and invite them to join you on the journey of faith in a welcoming, friendly and non-judgemental way. Create opportunities for people to engage in ways that are appropriate to them and their needs.

**Key** LOVE IN ACTION

A loving action always bears fruit. God acts through you in every act of kindness great or small. Remember to live the message openly by being joyful when you help others.

**Key** SIMPLE ACTS DONE WELL

St Thérèse of Lisieux reminds us there is great evangelising power in simplicity. Avoid over complicating things and focus instead on doing simple things in the best possible way.

**Key** COMMUNICATION

Think about how the world is communicating today. If needed, enlist the help of those with "know how" to embrace and make the most of new media (e.g. website, Facebook, Twitter).

# REACHING OUT TO NON-CHURCHGOING CATHOLICS

## Learning from Pope Francis

“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 evangelising community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. 1 John 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. Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. The Lord gets involved and he involves his own, as he kneels to wash their feet. He tells his disciples: You will be blessed if you do this (John 13:17). An evangelising 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. Evangelisers thus take on the smell of the sheep and the sheep are willing to hear their voice. An evangelising community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. It is familiar with patient expectation and apostolic endurance. Evangelisation consists mostly of patience and disregard for constraints of time.”

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 24



### Tip

## SEEK AND FIND

Find out, through use of parish records (baptism and marriage) and word of mouth, who the non-churchgoing Catholics are in your local area. Contact them, offering a home visit and / or invite them to a parish celebration. To see how other parishes have done this, explore the resources provided by the Crossing the Threshold Project: [www.cbcew.org.uk/ctt](http://www.cbcew.org.uk/ctt)

### Tip

## UNDERSTAND

Research the reasons why people have little to no contact with the parish. Watch the free testimony films of those who were non-churchgoing Catholics, but have returned to the practice of their faith: [www.cbcew.org.uk/ctt](http://www.cbcew.org.uk/ctt). See too on this website the free leaflet called Catholic and have lost touch?

### Tip

## MAKE SURE THE WHOLE PARISH IS ON-BOARD

Invite every Massgoer to pray for successful outreach to non-churchgoing Catholics. Form a parish team whose purpose is to resource every parish member to reach out to local non-churchgoing Catholics.

### Tip

## HANDOUTS

Prepare a bookmark featuring a prayer and invitation to people who are distant from parish life. Give the bookmarks out on major feast days, at baptisms, weddings, on Holy Communion Sundays and at Confirmations. Include parish contact information.

### Tip

## SEASONAL EVENTS

Make the most of seasonal outreach. Invite local people to nativity plays, carol services, Stations of the Cross and other events. Think about offering these activities outside the church building. Provide ways for attendees to participate and socialise afterwards.



## REACHING OUT TO NON-CHURCH GOING CATHOLICS

**Tip****CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

Strengthen the links between your parish and the local Catholic schools. Many baptised parents rarely come to church. Offer activities that might help them to renew their faith. Provide a parish information desk at parents' evening or at the school fete. Offer refreshments at sports day for parents. To inform your outreach planning, read the results of the Bishops' Conference latest survey to baptised parents of children in Catholic Schools who rarely attend church: [www.cbcew.org.uk/ctt](http://www.cbcew.org.uk/ctt).

**Tip****WELCOME**

Each person in the parish should understand that their welcome to others is a vital part of parish evangelisation. Invite Massgoing teens to "buddy up" with teens in new families and provide a selection of suitable children's books to help keep some children occupied during Mass.

**Tip****CHURCH HALL OUTREACH**

Most parish halls are used for non-parish events by people who are not churchgoers. See this as an evangelising opportunity. Ensure that your hall communicates faith by having a crucifix, beautiful pictures and a parish welcome notice on display, including a clearly visible list of upcoming events.

**Tip****STAYING IN TOUCH**

When people stop going to church they can lose touch with the parish very quickly. Keep your parish website updated regularly with Mass times, dates of key events and a contact number. Use text messaging, Twitter or Facebook to let people know what is going on. Offer them the opportunity to sign up for the newsletter.

**Tip****ARE YOU VISIBLE IN THE LOCAL AREA?**

When and how does your parish go out into the local community to meet people? With the necessary permissions, try setting up a prayer wall on the local high street on a Saturday morning, or give people a candle and ask them to visit the church to light it, say a prayer and enjoy a free cup of coffee and a chat.

**Learning from Pope Francis**

"In this Jubilee Year, let us allow God to surprise us. He never tires of casting open the doors of his heart and of repeating that he loves us and wants to share his love with us. The Church feels the urgent need to proclaim God's mercy. Her life is authentic and credible only when she becomes a convincing herald of mercy. She knows that her primary task, especially at a moment full of great hopes and signs of contradiction, is to introduce everyone to the great mystery of God's mercy by contemplating the face of Christ. The Church is called above all to be a credible witness to mercy, professing it and living it as the core of the revelation of Jesus Christ. From the heart of the Trinity, from the depths of the mystery of God, the great river of mercy wells up and overflows unceasingly. It is a spring that will never run dry, no matter how many people draw from it. Every time someone is in need, he or she can approach it, because the mercy of God never ends. The profundity of the mystery surrounding it is as inexhaustible as the richness which springs up from it."

Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter, *Misericordiae Vultus*, 25