

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).

SHARING YOUR TESTIMONY

Learning from Pope Paul VI

"... It is appropriate first of all to emphasise the following point: for the Church, the first means of evangelisation is the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one's neighbour with limitless zeal. As we said recently to a group of lay people, 'Modern man listens more

willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.'"

Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Nuntiandi, 41



Tip

SHARING YOUR TESTIMONY IS A GIFT TO ANOTHER

Whatever your story, remember your testimony of faith is a gift to someone else. Have confidence that the Lord can use it no matter how humble you feel it is. Testimonies help people to identify with you and your faith in real life situations. A testimony should always be shared in a non-confrontational way and aim to engage the heart as well as the mind. It should demonstrate God's love and/or mercy and his presence in our world today.



Tip

UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE OF TESTIMONY

Testimonies should aim to increase faith in the minds and hearts of all those who hear them. They should communicate an encounter with the Lord. Reflect, with others, on the purpose of sharing a testimony - to engage the listener, raise curiosity, and ignite a desire to learn more about Jesus Christ and the Catholic Faith.



Tip

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR TESTIMONY SHARING

Invite parishioners to write about their stories of encounter with Jesus Christ. Provide opportunities for them to share their testimonies with fellow parishioners, so that they can practise and grow in confidence as evangelisers.



Tip

SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

Create an easy-to-use template to support your testimony preparation. Think beginning, middle and end. Firstly, write about the context and background that relates to your encounter with Jesus Christ. Next, describe simply and clearly what happened during the encounter. Finally, comment on how your life was changed and/or enriched by this experience.



Tip

KEEP A FAITH DIARY

Consider keeping a record of moments of encounter with the Lord. Make notes to keep your points clear. When you meet someone, choose one of your stories to share with them, as best fits that person. Avoiding reading them your story and speak from the heart.

SHARING YOUR TESTIMONY



Tip

IN YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE

Think about moments in your everyday life when you have experienced God, that you are happy to share with others. Stories of encounter with the Lord are powerful. To protect the privacy of others, only talk about your own experiences.



Tip

RECOGNISE OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE YOUR STORY

Recognise the many opportunities that God gives you to share your story. Consider where and when it would be appropriate to talk to others; for example, at special times of the year like Christmas and Easter, or at special events such as weddings and baptisms. Sometimes in response to the simple everyday questions that people ask you can share a testimony of faith.



Tip

SHARING YOUR TESTIMONY

The more you share your testimony of faith, the more comfortable and natural it will become. Do not be afraid to be vulnerable. Start in a place of safety and comfort; for example, in your own parish. Remember to pray before you speak. Have a clear beginning, middle and end, and know when to stop, listen and accept feedback in a positive manner.



Tip

CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE

Be mindful of the comfort of those you are speaking to – put them at ease, ensure they can hear you, use language they are familiar with, keep good eye contact, give them time to listen and absorb what you are saying.



Tip

BE GUIDED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Be yourself at all times. Speak naturally and take responsibility for what you are saying. Sometimes there is no time to prepare when asked a question in the pub or at the school gates, for example. Have confidence and be guided by the Holy Spirit. Remember to seek God, not religious experience.

Learning from our Popes

“It is really so: the purpose of our lives is to reveal God to men [and to women]. And only where God is seen does life truly begin. Only when we meet the living God in Christ do we know what life is. We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary. There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know him and to speak to others of our friendship with Him.”

Pope Benedict XVI, Mass of Inauguration of the Pontificate, Homily, 24 April 2005

“Each of us should find ways to communicate Jesus wherever we are.”

Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 121