

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 THOSE WITH NO CHURCH EXPERIENCE

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



Tip

BUILD CONFIDENCE

Offer an evening, or a series of evenings in the parish, to help parishioners discern their charism and gifts; for example, by hosting “Called and Gifted” workshops (see Sherry Weddell’s website: www.sherryweddell.blogspot.co.uk). This will help to build confidence among parishioners to reach out to those with no church experience.

Tip

GIVE PRACTICAL EXPRESSION TO GOD’S MERCY

Do an audit in your parish to identify the ways in which you are a channel of God’s love to those in need in your area. Seek to encourage parishioners to be the first to celebrate, to congratulate, to thank and to smile. This kind of gentle witness to the Christian Faith can stimulate curiosity and positive questioning in the minds of those who have no church experience.

Tip

BE PEOPLE OF JOY

Communicate the joy of being Christian. Never look like someone who’s just returned from a funeral (*Evangelii Gaudium*). Seek to encourage parishioners to be the first to celebrate, to congratulate, to thank, to smile, in so doing provoke questions, in those who have no church experience, through their own witness of a Christian life.

Tip

SPACES FOR ENCOUNTER

Work out to whom you would like to reach out and create spaces for encounter. Who are the people in your neighbourhood who have no experience of Church? Seek to create environments outside the safety-net of church buildings where you can foster an experience of Christ. Consider places and events that are stepping stones on the path of conversion.

Tip

PRAY

Pray for the unchurched who are already in your life and for your own relationship with them. Find ways to start conversations with them about Jesus Christ.

REACHING OUT TO THOSE WITH NO CHURCH EXPERIENCE



Tip

SURVEY YOUR LOCAL AREA

Conduct a survey in your local area asking open, friendly questions about what services and community activities might enhance the lives of local families and individuals. If the survey is conducted in person, this could provide an opportunity to ask questions about about what people might be looking for from their local Church. The responses given can assist parish outreach planning.



Tip

ORGANISE A SEEKERS' EVENT

A seekers' event should be a relaxed and informal session, or group of sessions, giving people the opportunity to ask questions. Use the Evangelising Together Manual (www.seekersteam.com/seekers_teams_009.htm). Invite people to this group. Begin with prayer and include simple sustenance.



Tip

INVITE

Be aware of what you are inviting people to. Take it step-by-step. Start with invitations to informal gatherings. Brief your parishioners to consider how non-Catholics will feel when visiting the church for the first time. A simple explanation of what will be celebrated will ensure that those with no church experience understand what is going on and will help them to participate.



Tip

PROVOKE THOUGHT IN PEOPLE'S DAILY LIVES

Find innovative ways of providing unexpected moments for prayer in people's daily lives – see Lift the City (www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZ5aYoSr3Hg)



Learning from Pope Francis

"All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy. The Church's very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love. The Church 'has an endless desire to show mercy'. Perhaps we have long since forgotten how to show and live the way of mercy. The time has come for the Church to take up the joyful call to mercy once more. It is time to return to the basics and to bear the weaknesses and struggles of our brothers and sisters. Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instils in us the courage to look to the future with hope."

Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter, *Misericordiae Vultus*, 10