



ARCHBISHOP
JOSÉ H. GOMEZ

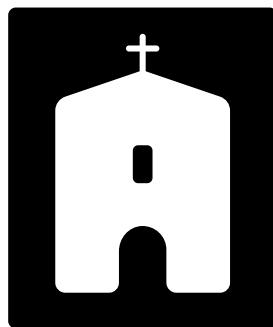
WITNESS TO THE NEW WORLD OF FAITH:

A STUDY GUIDE TO THE PASTORAL LETTER OF
MOST REVEREND JOSÉ H. GOMEZ • ARCHBISHOP OF LOS ANGELES

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ANGELUS

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C O N T E N T S

Preface.....	1
Study Session 1	3
Study Session 2	11
Study Session 3	19
Study Session 4.....	27
Study Session 5	37
Study Session 6.....	45
Study Session 7	53
Study Session 8.....	61
Study Session 9	69

P R E F A C E

WHAT IS A PASTORAL LETTER?

A pastoral letter is an official message from a bishop, addressed to all his clergy or all the Catholic people in his diocese. Through a pastoral letter, the bishop expresses his thinking and teaching on issues and offers words of guidance and hope at a particular moment in the life of the local Church.

Pastoral letters have been an important part of the life of the Catholic Church since the beginning. Most of the books of the Bible's New Testament are simply letters written by the Apostles to their churches.

There are many reasons why a bishop might write a pastoral letter. He can write to clarify a doctrine of the faith. He can write to celebrate a special occasion — a feast day or a milestone in the life of the local Church. He can write to warn people of spiritual or moral dangers.

Most often, perhaps, a bishop will write a pastoral letter in order to set an agenda — to establish goals and priorities for the local Church and lay out a plan for reaching those goals. Sometimes the aim is specific — affecting a small aspect of Church life. Sometimes it is more general and programmatic.

The 2012 pastoral letter of Archbishop José Gomez falls into this last, and most important, category. *Witness to the New World of Faith: A Pastoral Letter to the Family of God in Los Angeles on the New Evangelization and our Missionary Call*, the letter establishes his pastoral priorities for the Church that Archbishop Gomez has been called to lead.

The letter also reflects his overriding concern for the new evangelization of Los Angeles and the wider culture of California and the continents of the Americas. This first pastoral letter gives the Church of Los Angeles a guide for family life, a map for our journey together.

STUDY SESSION 1

What Is Evangelization?

KEY POINTS

- Our world — our city and society — needs a new evangelization. Our neighbors need to know Jesus Christ.
- People have lost their sense of God's love. This has had terrible effects on families, society, and individual lives.
- Only Jesus can show us God's face.
- Jesus saves us to live in God's family, which is the Church.

SUMMARY

With his opening words, Archbishop Gomez speaks of the need for a New Evangelization. The idea dates to the time of Pope Blessed Paul VI, though it was Pope Saint John Paul II who coined the phrase. Saint John Paul spoke of an evangelization that would be "new in its ardor, new in its methods, and new in its expression."¹ Pope Benedict XVI spoke of the qualities that made such an effort "new" and distinct from past missions to proclaim Jesus Christ. Today's efforts, he said, must involve everyone — laity, religious, and clergy — and they must reach everyone, both Catholics and non-Catholics. They must aim for conversion of individuals, but also families and even the wider culture.

¹ Pope Saint John Paul II, Address to the Latin American Bishops, 1983.

Evangelization means simply spreading the Gospel — with our words and with our deeds. It means sharing the life of Christ with everyone, without exceptions. Evangelization is the duty of every baptized Christian. God will help us to accomplish his will for the world. We will be judged on our fidelity to this task.

FROM ARCHBISHOP GOMEZ

My dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ,

1. The world needs a new evangelization! The people of our city, our nation and our continent are waiting for the encounter with Jesus Christ who makes all things new.

In every age, Jesus draws near to offer his salvation to all people. He calls: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock!"

Jesus invites men and women to follow him and seek the Kingdom of God. He calls them to live as God's children in his family, the Catholic Church.

But in our time, it seems to be getting harder for people to hear the voice of Jesus and his promise of salvation. There are many other voices and many other customs of living. Our society is growing more secularized.

People are losing their awareness of God's presence in the world and in their lives. And as the sense of God fades, we see around us the sad effects in lost lives and broken families.

The men and women of our time need someone to show them the way to Jesus, who alone can show them the face of God. They need someone to help open up the door of faith for them.²

They are waiting for us, my dear brothers and sisters!

² Act 14:27.

IN THIS NEW MOMENT OF GRACE

2. These thoughts come to my mind at this new moment of grace in the life of our great Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

As I write this letter to you, we have just celebrated the tenth anniversary of the consecration of our Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels.

Our Cathedral is a living sign of the Church's mission to **evangelize** — to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and his Kingdom — in the heart of our city and our world.³

The Church exists to evangelize. The Church belongs to Jesus and he gave her only one mission, the salvation of souls: "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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."⁴

The Church's mission is ever ancient and ever new. And all of us in the Church — bishops, priests and deacons; religious and consecrated men and women; seminarians and lay people in every walk of life — we all have responsibility for this mission.

3. That is why I am writing this pastoral letter to you in this moment of grace. You have become dear to my heart — as my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ and my co-workers in the mission of evangelization that he calls us to. I have spent much of these last two and a half years trying to get to know as many of you as I can. What a blessing it has been to travel this vast and beautiful territory of the Archdiocese to visit your families and parishes. These moments when I have had the chance to offer the Eucharist for you or the chance to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation for your children — these have been a joy in my life and ministry.

³ 2 Cor. 10:16; Acts 8:4, 12, 25, 35, 40.

⁴ Matt. 16:18; 28:19–20; see Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi, Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World* (December 8, 1975), 14.

My brothers and sisters, I am humbled by your beautiful witness to our Catholic faith in your ministries and in your daily lives. Your generous love for God and our neighbors inspires me and gives me hope.

The family that God has gathered here in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles is special.

Our Church is alive — youthful, vibrant and growing. The Gospel has borne much fruit here. Today we are our nation's largest and most diverse local Church. God continues to give us growth, as we are baptizing tens of thousands of children each year.

We are a living picture of what our Father created his Church to be — *una familia de Dios*, one family of God with sons and daughters drawn from every nation, race, people and language.

Our Church is the heart and soul of our secular city, pointing our neighbors to God and protecting the sanctity of the human person through all our works of education and advocacy and caring for those in need.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 28:18–20

Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

Mark 16:15

He said to them, “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature.”

TEACHING AND TRADITION

Thus the Church, at once a visible association and a spiritual community, goes forward together with humanity and experiences the same earthly lot which the world does. She serves as a leaven and as a kind of soul for human society as it is to be renewed in Christ and transformed into God's family.

— Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 40

Those who have received the Good News and who have been gathered by it into the community of salvation can and must communicate and spread it. ... The Church knows this. She has a vivid awareness of the fact that the Savior's words, "I must proclaim the Good News of the kingdom of God," apply in all truth to herself: She willingly adds with St. Paul: "Not that I boast of preaching the gospel, since it is a duty that has been laid on me; I should be punished if I did not preach it." ... 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."

— Blessed Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nn. 13–14.

SONG

Go Make Of All Disciples

(to the tune of "I Sing the Mighty Power of God")

1. "Go make of all disciples":

We hear the call, O Lord,

That comes from you, our Father,

In your eternal Word.

Inspire our ways of learning

Through earnest, fervent prayer,

And let our daily living

Reveal you ev'rywhere.

2. "Go make of all disciples."

Baptizing in the name
Of Father, Son, and Spirit
From age to age the same.
We call each new disciple
To follow you, O Lord,
Redeeming soul and body
By water and the Word.

3. "Go make of all disciples."

We at your feet would stay
Until each life's vocation
Accents your holy way.
We cultivate the nature
God plants in ev'ry heart,
Revealing in our witness
The Master Teacher's art.

4. "Go make of all disciples."

We welcome your command;
"Lo, I am with you always."
We take your guiding hand.
The task looms large before us
We follow without fear.
In heav'n and earth your power
Shall bring God's kingdom here.

Alternative hymns: "Come, Holy Ghost"; "One Spirit, One Church"; "Lord, You Give the Great Commission."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. The Archbishop speaks of a society unable to sense God's presence because it has grown "more secularized." In what ways is God hidden in today's society?
2. What are the "sad effects" of the loss of the sense of God? For individuals? For families? For society?
3. What does Christ have to offer to individuals? To families? To society? How might Christ accomplish these things through you?
4. In what ways can our cathedral church be seen as a symbol of our mission to evangelize?
5. How do people think of the Church? How might their actions and attitude change if they thought of the Church as a family?
6. In what sense is the Church a family? How does it resemble a typical household? How do they differ? How can we more perfectly resemble the family God created the Church to be?
7. How does the Church's current view of evangelization differ from the way Catholics discussed "missions" in the past? What difference should this make to individual believers?

STUDY SESSION 2

California's Catholic Heritage and Missionary Identity

KEY POINTS

- America's first evangelists were devout Catholics.
- The Christian faith is an integral part of California's history, culture, and even geography.
- At its founding, the city of Los Angeles was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the holy angels.
- The Catholic Church continues to raise the cross above the region's history as it unfolds, its culture, its land, and its people.

SUMMARY

Too often, the early history of our country is told as a triumph of secularism — or it is presented as the exclusive achievement of English pilgrims and Puritans. Archbishop Gomez reminds us that the Christian faith arrived here first through the ministry of Catholic missionaries. The California missions became centers of an emerging, distinctively American culture, with its own spirituality and forms of artistic expression.

FROM ARCHBISHOP GOMEZ

Reclaiming our Missionary History

6. For the first evangelists of the Americas, these continents were the New World that Jesus had taught his followers to hope for.⁵ So with a zeal for souls, they came from Spain to Mexico and from there they traveled all over this beautiful new world, proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.

America's first missionaries named this land's rivers, mountains, forests and cities for the saints and mysteries of the Catholic Church. They learned local languages and customs and they sowed the seeds of the Gospel to create a rich Christian civilization — expressed in poems and plays, paintings and statues, songs, prayers, devotions, architecture, and even laws and policies.

The Church's mission to California, led by the great Franciscan priest Blessed Junípero Serra, built churches up and down the long coastal road they called the King's Highway, *El Camino Real*.

Along this road, our great city was established. It was first called *El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles* — named for the angels of God and the Blessed Mother of Jesus Christ, who is the Queen of all the angels in heaven.

7. Los Angeles — like all of California and the Americas — is built on a Christian foundation. And today we are called to build on that missionary foundation to make a new evangelization of the Americas.

The original *El Camino Real* passed by not far from where our Cathedral is located, running alongside what nowadays we know as U.S. Route 101 or "The Hollywood Freeway."

The cross on the top of our Cathedral, which tens of thousands see every day as they ride this freeway, is a sign that the Christian mission to Los Angeles and the Americas continues in our day — even as the City of the Angels has become a highly diversified and secularized metropolis that drives technological innovations and shapes opinions, fashions and culture for the whole world.

⁵ Acts 1:8; Matthew 19:28; 1 Corinthians 15:24; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 11:15; 19:16.

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 19:2–5

The heavens declare the glory of God;
the firmament proclaims the works of his hands.
Day unto day pours forth speech;
night unto night whispers knowledge.
There is no speech, no words;
their voice is not heard;
A report goes forth through all the earth,
their messages, to the ends of the world.

Teaching and Tradition

Missionary motivation. It is from God's love for all men that the Church in every age receives both the obligation and the vigor of her missionary dynamism, "for the love of Christ urges us on." Indeed, God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"; that is, God wills the salvation of everyone through the knowledge of the truth. Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the prompting of the Spirit of truth are already on the way to salvation. But the Church, to whom this truth has been entrusted, must go out to meet their desire, so as to bring them the truth. Because she believes in God's universal plan of salvation, the Church must be missionary.

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 851.

Divinely sent to the nations of the world to be unto them "a universal sacrament of salvation," the Church, driven by the inner necessity of her own catholicity, and obeying the mandate of her Founder (Mark 16:16), strives ever to proclaim the Gospel to all men. The Apostles themselves, on whom the Church was founded, following in the footsteps of Christ, "preached the word of truth and begot churches." It is the duty of their successors to make this task endure "so that the word of God may run and be glorified (2 Thess. 3:1) and the kingdom of God be proclaimed and established throughout the world.

— Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes*, n. 1.

"I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47; Is 49:6). These words of the Lord, in the passage from the Acts of the Apostles which we have just heard, show us the missionary nature of the Church, sent by Jesus to go out and proclaim the Gospel. The disciples experienced this from the first moment when, after the persecution broke out, they left Jerusalem (Acts 8:1-3). This was true also for the many missionaries who brought the Gospel to the New World and, at the same time, defended the indigenous peoples against abuses by the colonizers. Among these missionaries was Friar Junípero [Serra]; his work of evangelization reminds us of the first "12 Franciscan apostles" who were pioneers of the Christian faith in Mexico. He ushered in a new springtime of evangelization in those immense territories, extending from Florida to California, which, in the previous 200 years, had been reached by missionaries from Spain. This was long before the pilgrims of the Mayflower reached the North Atlantic coast.

— Pope Francis, Homily (Pontifical North American College, May 2, 2015)

I come today as a pilgrim to this Mission of San Carlos, which so powerfully evokes the heroic spirit and heroic deeds of Fray Junípero Serra and which enshrines his mortal remains. This serene and beautiful place is truly the historical and spiritual heart of *California*...

Very often, at crucial moments in human affairs, God raises up men and women whom he thrusts into roles of decisive importance for the future development of both society and the Church. Although their story unfolds within the ordinary circumstances of daily life, they become larger than life within the perspective of history. We rejoice all the more when their achievement is coupled with a holiness of life that can truly be called heroic. So it is with Junípero Serra, who in the providence of God was destined to be *the Apostle of California*, and to have a permanent influence over the spiritual patrimony of this land and its people, whatever their religion might be. This apostolic awareness is captured in the words ascribed to him: "In California is my life and there, God willing, I hope to die". Through Christ's Paschal Mystery, that death has become a seed in the soil of this state that continues to bear fruit "thirty-or sixty-or a hundred-fold" (Matt. 13, 9).

— Pope Saint John Paul II, Address (Basilica of the Mission of San Carlos in Carmel, September 17, 1987)

The evangelization of America is not only a gift from the Lord; it is also a source of new responsibilities. Thanks to the work of those who preached the Gospel through the length and breadth of the continent, countless sons and daughters have been generated by the Church and the Holy Spirit. Now, no less than in the past, the words of the Apostle echo in their hearts: “If I preach the Gospel, I have no reason to boast. It is my duty: woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!” (1 Cor. 9:16). This duty is founded on the Risen Lord’s command to the Apostles before he ascended into heaven: “Preach the Gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15). This command applies to the whole Church; and, in this moment of her history, the Church in America is called to take it up and respond with loving generosity to the fundamental task of evangelization.

— Pope Saint John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, n. 1

SONG

Come Holy Spirit, Creator Blest (Veni, Creator Spiritus)

Come Holy Spirit, Creator blest,
and in our souls take up Thy rest;
come with Thy grace and heavenly aid
to fill the hearts which Thou hast made.

O comforter, to Thee we cry,
O heavenly gift of God Most High,
O fount of life and fire of love,
and sweet anointing from above.

Thou in Thy sevenfold gifts are known;
Thou, finger of God’s hand we own;
Thou, promise of the Father, Thou
Who dost the tongue with power imbue.

Kindle our sense from above,
and make our hearts o’erflow with love;

with patience firm and virtue high
the weakness of our flesh supply.

Far from us drive the foe we dread,
and grant us Thy peace instead;
so shall we not, with Thee for guide,
turn from the path of life aside.

Oh, may Thy grace on us bestow
the Father and the Son to know;
and Thee, through endless times confessed,
of both the eternal Spirit blest.

Now to the Father and the Son,
Who rose from death, be glory given,
with Thou, O Holy Comforter,
henceforth by all in earth and heaven.
Amen.

Alternative hymns: "For All the Saints," "Faith of Our Fathers"; "O God Our Help in Ages Past"; "Give Thanks to God on High"; "Lift High the Cross."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What do you like best about the cultural heritage of southern California? Particular styles of cooking? Styles of music? Which ethnic groups deserve credit for the California you have come to love?
2. What are distinctive marks of the religious devotion of the people in our region? What particular practices make us different or even unique? Which ethnic groups deserve credit for the faith you have come to treasure?
3. United States history, as it has appeared in many school textbooks, was written from an "East Coast" perspective. What gets lost or glossed over when history is written that way?
4. Is California history different because of the influence of Catholic missionaries? If so, in what ways?
5. Who are the figures most impressive to you from the history of the California Church? Why?
6. Do Catholics of southern California, gifted with their particular history, have anything distinctive to give the rest of the country and the rest of the Church? If so, what is it?
7. How do your particular devotions — how does your own faith life — show the universality and "catholicity" of the Church? Think of the saints who have influenced you. Think of the prayers that have formed you. Think of your own family heritage.

STUDY SESSION 3

In This New Moment of Grace

KEY POINTS

- We live in a “new moment of grace” in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.
- Our local Church has witnessed great events in recent decades: the 1987 pastoral visit of Pope Saint John Paul II; the building of our cathedral; the 2003 Archdiocesan Synod; and Pope Benedict XVI’s announcement of a Year of Faith in 2012-2013.
- Based on the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council’s goals and objectives for the local Church, the Archbishop has set five pastoral priorities.

SUMMARY

Our local Church is heir to the deeds of missionaries and saints who lived centuries ago. This heritage of evangelization, however, is not merely long-ago history. It has continued into our own times. The Archbishop identifies several key events in the recent life of the Archdiocese — events that show the continued blessings of God upon our people. These are special graces we have received. Our task is to receive them gratefully and use them for their intended purpose: the renewal of the Church.

FROM ARCHBISHOP GOMEZ

Our Vocation as the Archdiocese of Los Angeles

8. Our vocation as the Archdiocese of Los Angeles is to continue and fulfill Christ's mission to the New World.

We need to embrace this Year of Faith as a time of interior renewal and spiritual preparation for a new Christian witness to our city and our continent.

In this spirit, our Archdiocesan Pastoral Council has proposed a series of practical goals and objectives to help us to grow in our faith and knowledge of the Gospel. The Council's proposals, which will be published in the weeks to come, coincide with its final reports and recommendations on implementing the Archdiocesan Synod of 2003.

The Synod has been a source of grace for our Archdiocese. And its vision has helped me as I have been praying and reflecting on what our pastoral priorities should be in the years ahead.

Thanks to the Synod's vision and the Pastoral Council's continued dedication, we are able to see more clearly that our local Church has this special vocation to the new evangelization.

So this Year of Faith should be a time for growing in our knowledge of the gift of God we have been given. It should be a time for us to become better equipped to live the calling we have received and to bear witness to the hope we have in Jesus.⁶ And this Year of Faith must be a moment of renewal of faith for each one of us and for our Archdiocese — for our parishes and schools; for our catechesis and religious education programs; for our social ministries!

My brothers and sisters, I firmly believe that our Archdiocesan family has entered a new moment of grace.

In addition to our Cathedral's tenth anniversary, we have also just celebrated the

⁶ John 4:10, 22; Acts 17:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; Colossians 1:10; 1 Peter 3:15.

twenty-fifth anniversary of Pope Saint John Paul II's pastoral visit to Los Angeles, on September 15–16, 1987.

This visit was a beautiful blessing and continues to be a font of grace for this Archdiocese. So I invoke Blessed John Paul's intercession for our local Church and for each one of us in this Year of Faith.

Priorities for the New Evangelization

Blessed John Paul called the Church to a "new evangelization — new in its ardor, methods, and expression."⁷ Our task is to take up his call. We must find new ways and new enthusiasm to evangelize — in our families, our work, and in every ministry of our Church.

In that spirit, I want to suggest some basic directions and initiatives so that we can make the most of this year of renewal. I want to do that by recalling the *five pastoral priorities* that I set out at the beginning of my ministry.

These priorities reflect our communion — with the bishops of California and the United States, with our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI, and with the whole universal Church. They also reflect our Archdiocesan Synod's goals of promoting faith education, sacramental life, social justice, evangelization, collegial leadership, and a greater sense of responsibility in ministry.

In this Year of Faith, I believe these five priorities can serve as a useful framework for focusing our efforts at renewal.

SCRIPTURE

St. Paul, Letter to the Romans 10:12-15, 17

The same Lord is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." But how can they call on him in

⁷ Pope Saint John Paul II, Address to the 19th Assembly of the Latin American Episcopal Council (March 9, 1983), 3.

whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news!" ... Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.

TEACHING AND TRADITION

Lay people also fulfill their prophetic mission by evangelization, "that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life." For lay people, "this evangelization ... acquires a specific property and peculiar efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world." "This witness of life, however, is not the sole element in the apostolate; the true apostle is on the lookout for occasions of announcing Christ by word, either to unbelievers ... or to the faithful."

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 905

I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church's energies to a new evangelization and to the mission *ad gentes* [to the nations]. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples.

— Pope Saint John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 3

The new evangelization in which the whole continent is engaged means that faith cannot be taken for granted, but must be explicitly proposed in all its breadth and richness.

— Pope Saint John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, n. 69

Dear people of this great Archdiocese of Los Angeles, with its many problems, its enormous challenges, and its immense possibilities for good: *the name of Jesus is your life and your salvation*. It is your pride and joy, and the pride and joy of your families and your parishes. In this name you find strength for your weaknesses and energy for daily Christian living. In your struggle against evil and the Evil One, and in your striving for holiness, the name of Jesus is the source of your hope, because in the name of Jesus you are invincible!

Continue, then, dear Catholic people of Los Angeles, to invoke this holy name of Jesus in your joys and your sorrows; continue to teach this name to your children, so that they in turn can teach it to their children, until the Lord Jesus himself comes in glory to judge the living and the dead!

— Pope Saint John Paul II, Address (Cathedral of Saint Vibiana, September 15, 1987)

SONG

This Day God Gives Me

1. This day God gives me
Strength of high heaven,
Sun and moon shining,
Flame in my hearth,
Flashing of lightning,
Wind in its swiftness,
Deeps of the ocean,
Firmness of earth.

2. This day God sends me
Strength as my guardian,
Might to uphold me,
Wisdom as guide.
Your eyes are watchful,
Your ears are list'ning,
Your lips are speaking,
Friend at my side.

3. God's way is my way,
God's shield is 'round me,
God's host defends me,
Saving from ill.
Angels of heaven,
Drive from me always
All that would harm me,
Stand by me still.

4. Rising I thank you,
Mighty and Strong One,
King of creation,
Giver of rest,
Firmly confessing
Threeness of Persons,
Oneness of Godhead,
Trinity blest.

Alternative hymns: "Come, Worship the Lord"; "We Are One Body"; "Glory and Praise to Our God."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What events, in the course of your lifetime, have given you a sense of God's providence for the Church?
2. What is special about the life of the Church today? What particular graces has God given us?
3. What tasks and responsibilities correspond with the graces particular to our times?
4. What does the word "renewal" suggest to you? What "new things" is the Church proposing today? What "old things" is it re-presenting and giving new life?
5. What do events such as Church Synods and papal visits mean to ordinary Catholics? What should they mean? How can you help to bridge the gap with the people you know?
6. The Archbishop speaks of a common "calling" in the Church. What is the vocation of the laity? How does it differ from other vocations?
7. Why is our "witness to hope" so important today?

STUDY SESSION 4

Priority 1: Education in the Faith

KEY POINTS

- As long as we are living, we should pursue a deeper knowledge of the faith.
- Our “textbooks” are the Bible and the official teachings of the Church.
- We all share in the priesthood of Jesus, and our daily work is our offering to God.

SUMMARY

We could never, in the course of many lifetimes, exhaust the riches of the truth of the Catholic faith. If we live for a hundred years, we will still make new discoveries. We should desire always to know more about Jesus and our salvation. We should focus our efforts on the most reliable sources of information, and we should pursue our studies in a disciplined way. Then we can apply what we've learned to our everyday lives. The Archbishop identifies as his first priority — educating and forming Catholics for deeper knowledge and more intense and prayerful living of their Catholic faith. And he introduces us to some traditional methods of growing in our knowledge and faith in Jesus Christ.

FROM ARCHBISHOP GOMEZ

9. My first pastoral priority is *education in the faith*.

No matter who we are or what point we are at in our faith journey, all of us need to grow in our knowledge of the faith. So let us make this Year of Faith a time for really learning *what we believe* as Catholics and why we believe these things. Let us also learn *what difference these beliefs should make* in our lives and in our world.

In concrete terms, let us make this a year for learning how to pray better and read the Gospels with more lively faith and deeper understanding. I highly recommend that we commit ourselves to learning the ancient Catholic practice of *lectio divina*, in which our reading of the sacred text becomes a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, the living Word of God, who challenges and guides our lives.⁸

I also hope that we will all make this the year when we begin the habit of life-long learning in our faith.

A good place to begin is to study the teachings of the Second Vatican Council (1962– 1965), especially as they are expressed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. We need to listen to what the Spirit is still saying to the Church today through the Council.⁹

For me, Vatican II’s most important insight was to recover the Gospel teaching of the universal call to holiness — that we are all called to be saints.¹⁰ The Council taught a vision of faith that embraces all of life. The Council reminded us that we are all called to be transformed by grace into the image of Jesus Christ and that we are all called to work with his grace to transform our world in the image of the Kingdom of God.

⁸ Pope Benedict XVI gives us very practical guidance on the practice of *lectio divina* in *Verbum Domini*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church (September 30, 2010), 86–87.

⁹ Revelation 2:7.

¹⁰ Romans 1:7; Phil. 1:1.

This is the vision of faith that is necessary if we are to be credible witnesses for the new evangelization in our globalized society. So in this Year of Faith, we need to deepen our understanding of the Council's vision. We need to make that vision the foundation for our witness to our city, our country and our world.

THE LAY VOCATION TO BE EUCHARISTIC PEOPLE

I pray that this Year of Faith will be the year when lay people rediscover their vocation to proclaim the Gospel in the middle of the world — in their homes, in the economy, in the places where they work, and in all their political and civic duties.

Dear lay people: the faith you profess on Sundays must be lived out in the world during the rest of the week! You are called to *sanctify* your work. That means you need to see your daily activities as the place where you meet and walk with Jesus, seeking holiness and the Father's will.

Each of you has a part to play in building up this earthly city in light of the Kingdom of God. Together we have to fill our society with the values of the Gospel — the values of truth, justice, solidarity and freedom.

Education in the faith must lead to a more intense practice of the faith. We should want to know our faith better so that we can live it more fully, with greater love and devotion.

That is why education in the faith — like everything else in the Church — must be rooted in the mystery of the Eucharist. *We have to live the Mass!* That is the goal of education in the faith — that we become *Eucharistic people*, living with the awareness that we all have a *priestly soul*.¹¹

As Jesus Christ offered his Body and Blood for us on the cross, and as he renews his sacrifice in every Eucharist, we are called to live in imitation of him.

We are called to work with the graces we receive in the Eucharist and to make our lives something beautiful that we offer to God. We are called to make our

¹¹ 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6; Romans 15:16.

lives a prayer — a gift that we offer in love for the glory of God’s name and for the salvation of our brothers and sisters.¹²

SCRIPTURE

John 6:45-48, 51

[Jesus said:] “It is written in the prophets: ‘They shall all be taught by God.’ Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life ... I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.”

Saint Paul, Letter to the Ephesians 1:15–19

Therefore, I, too, hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and of your love for all the holy ones, do not cease giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him. May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe, in accord with the exercise of his great might.

TEACHING AND TRADITION

The Church has always considered catechesis one of her primary tasks, for, before Christ ascended to His Father after His resurrection, He gave the apostles a final command — to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to observe all that He had commanded. He thus entrusted them with the mission and power to proclaim to humanity what they had heard, what they had seen with their eyes, what they had looked upon and touched with their hands, concerning

¹² Matthew 16:24–25; 1 John 3:16–18; Romans 12:1; Hebrews 13:15; 1 Peter 2:5.

the Word of Life. He also entrusted them with the mission and power to explain with authority what He had taught them, His words and actions, His signs and commandments. And He gave them the Spirit to fulfill this mission.

Very soon the name of catechesis was given to the whole of the efforts within the Church to make disciples, to help people to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, so that believing they might have life in His name, and to educate and instruct them in this life and thus build up the Body of Christ. The Church has not ceased to devote her energy to this task.

— Pope Saint John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, n. 1

"At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father ... who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever." To catechize is "to reveal in the Person of Christ the whole of God's eternal design reaching fulfillment in that Person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ's actions and words and of the signs worked by him." Catechesis aims at putting "people ... in communion ... with Jesus Christ: only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity."

In catechesis "Christ, the Incarnate Word and Son of God ... is taught — everything else is taught with reference to him — and it is Christ alone who teaches — anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ's spokesman, enabling Christ to teach with his lips. ... Every catechist should be able to apply to himself the mysterious words of Jesus: "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me."

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 426–427

The specific aim of catechesis is to develop, with God's help, an as yet initial faith, and to advance in fullness and to nourish day by day the Christian life of the faithful, young and old. It is in fact a matter of giving growth, at the level of knowledge and in life, to the seed of faith sown by the Holy Spirit with the initial proclamation and effectively transmitted by Baptism.

Catechesis aims therefore at developing understanding of the mystery of Christ in the light of God's Word, so that the whole of a person's humanity

is impregnated by that Word. Changed by the working of grace into a new creature, the Christian thus sets himself to follow Christ and learns more and more within the Church to think like Him, to judge like Him, to act in conformity with His commandments, and to hope as He invites us to...

It is true that being a Christian means saying "yes" to Jesus Christ, but let us remember that this "yes" has two levels: It consists in surrendering to the Word of God and relying on it, but it also means, at a later stage, endeavoring to know better and better the profound meaning of this Word.

— Pope Saint John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, n. 20

The light of Christ shines, as in a mirror, upon the face of Christians; as it spreads, it comes down to us, so that we too can share in that vision and reflect that light to others, in the same way that, in the Easter liturgy, the light of the Paschal candle lights countless other candles. Faith is passed on, we might say, by contact, from one person to another, just as one candle is lighted from another. Christians, in their poverty, plant a seed so rich that it becomes a great tree, capable of filling the world with its fruit.

The transmission of the faith not only brings light to men and women in every place; it travels through time, passing from one generation to another. Because faith is born of an encounter which takes place in history and lights up our journey through time, it must be passed on in every age. It is through an unbroken chain of witnesses that we come to see the face of Jesus...

Faith's past, that act of Jesus' love which brought new life to the world, comes down to us through the memory of others — witnesses — and is kept alive in that one remembering subject which is the Church. The Church is a Mother who teaches us to speak the language of faith. ... The Church, like every family, passes on to her children the whole store of her memories.

— Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, nn. 37–38

"The Christian faithful need a fuller understanding of the relationship between the Eucharist and their daily lives. Eucharistic spirituality is not just participation in Mass and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. It embraces the whole of life." ... It must be acknowledged that one of the most serious effects of the secularization ... is that it has relegated the Christian faith to the margins of life as if it were irrelevant to everyday affairs. The futility of this way of living — "as if God did not exist" — is now evident to everyone. Today there is a need to rediscover that Jesus Christ is not just a private conviction or an abstract idea, but a real person, whose becoming part of human history is capable of renewing the life of every man and woman. Hence the Eucharist, as the source and summit of the Church's life and mission, must be translated into spirituality, into a life lived "according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25).

— Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, n. 77

In my homily at the eucharistic celebration solemnly inaugurating my Petrine ministry, I said that "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." These words are all the more significant if we think of the mystery of the Eucharist. The love that we celebrate in the sacrament is not something we can keep to ourselves. By its very nature it demands to be shared with all. What the world needs is God's love; it needs to encounter Christ and to believe in him. The Eucharist is thus the source and summit not only of the Church's life, but also of her mission: "an authentically eucharistic Church is a missionary Church." ... We cannot approach the eucharistic table without being drawn into the mission which, beginning in the very heart of God, is meant to reach all people. Missionary outreach is thus an essential part of the eucharistic form of the Christian life.

— Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, n. 84

SONG

Savior, Teach Me Day by Day

(To the tune of "Hail Redeemer, King Divine")

1. Savior, teach me day by day
Love's sweet lesson to obey.
Sweeter lesson cannot be:
Loving him who first loved me.

2. With a child's glad heart of love
At Thy bidding may I move,
Prompt to serve and follow thee,
Loving him who first loved me.

3. Teach me thus thy steps to trace,
Strong to follow in thy grace,
Learning how to love from Thee,
Loving him who first loved me.

4. Love in loving finds employ,
In obedience all her joy;
Ever new that joy will be,
Loving him who first loved me.

5. Thus may I rejoice to show
That I feel the love I owe;
Singing, till thy face I see,
Of his love who first loved me.

Alternative hymns: "At That First Eucharist"; "Priestly People"; "Lord, Accept the Gifts We Offer."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. How has your growth in faith differed at different stages of your life?
2. How does knowledge of the faith transform lives?
3. What has been your most startling “discovery” about the faith learned in adulthood?
4. Have you ever made practical changes in your life based on something you learned about Catholic doctrine?
5. What role does authority serve in secular education? Can anyone claim the office of teacher in any subject? What role does authority play in the faith? Who has the authority to teach, and where does that authority come from?
6. How does the Eucharist educate us? What kind of example is Jesus setting?
7. How can better knowledge of Catholic doctrine lead to improvements in families, workplaces, and society?
8. How does study of the faith differ from other forms of study?

STUDY SESSION 5

Priority 2: Promoting Vocations

KEY POINTS

- God calls everyone to holiness. Some he calls to give their lives completely to the service of Christ and the Church.
- The Church, by God's design, depends upon priests and specially consecrated men and women.
- Catholics must be formed so that they are ready to receive God's call — and ready to respond.
- The Church must foster a "culture of vocations."

SUMMARY

Archbishop Gomez's second pastoral priority is inspiring Catholics to hear God's calling to the priesthood and to religious and consecrated life. Church always stands in need of good priests and consecrated men and women. Each calling comes from God. But we must not neglect the roles of the Church, the parish, and individual Catholics. We must pray, in a disciplined way, for God to call priests and religious for our local Church. We must create the conditions for boys and girls, men and women to hear the call. And we must help them respond.

FROM ARCHBISHOP GOMEZ

Building the Family of God

10. My second priority is to *promote vocations to the priesthood and to religious and consecrated life.*

Our Church always needs more men and women who can testify to the radical beauty of a life given totally to Jesus Christ. In this Year of Faith, I believe we need to focus especially on vocations to the priesthood.

The priesthood is a gift and a mystery in God's plan for the salvation of the world. The priest makes Christ present in the world. Through his priests, Christ speaks his words of forgiveness. Through his priests, he offers his Body and Blood as the bread of life for the life of the world.¹³

Jesus said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father."¹⁴ Through the ministry of the priest, we have Jesus. And through the spiritual fatherhood of the priest, the men and women of the world today can see and love their heavenly Father.

Vocations are born of a Catholic culture. And this Year of Faith should be a time in which we find new energy to support our priests and seminarians and to build this culture of vocations. One practical step we can take is to intensify our prayer as the family of God.

What a difference it would make if every Catholic and every parish were dedicated to praying every day for our priests and for new vocations! Imagine the graces that would flow, if many of us would commit ourselves to regular adoration of the Eucharist and holy hours to pray for vocations!

¹³ John 6:35, 51.

¹⁴ John 14:9.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 5:1-11

While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the Word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets."

When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that they were in danger of sinking. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon.

Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

Saint Peter, First Letter, 2:4–5, 9

Come to him, a living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God, and, like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...

But you are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises" of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were "no people" but now you are God's people; you "had not received mercy" but now you have received mercy.

Revelation 1:5–6

Grace to you and peace ... from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, who has made us into a kingdom, priests for his God and Father, to him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

TEACHING AND TRADITION

Since the beginning, the ordained ministry has been conferred and exercised in three degrees: that of bishops, that of presbyters, and that of deacons. The ministries conferred by ordination are irreplaceable for the organic structure of the Church: without the bishop, presbyters, and deacons, one cannot speak of the Church (cf. St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Trall.* 3,1).

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1593

Christ proposes the evangelical counsels, in their great variety, to every disciple. The perfection of charity, to which all the faithful are called, entails for those who freely follow the call to consecrated life the obligation of practicing chastity in celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom, poverty and obedience. It is the profession of these counsels, within a permanent state of life recognized by the Church, that characterizes the life consecrated to God.

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 915

The state of consecrated life is thus one way of experiencing a "more intimate" consecration, rooted in Baptism and dedicated totally to God. In the consecrated life, Christ's faithful, moved by the Holy Spirit, propose to follow Christ more nearly, to give themselves to God who is loved above all and, pursuing the perfection of charity in the service of the Kingdom, to signify and proclaim in the Church the glory of the world to come.

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 916

Vatican II establishes the ministerial priesthood at the service of the common priesthood of the faithful; each participates in the single priesthood of Christ, although in a qualitatively different way. Christ, High and Eternal Priest, has redeemed us and has shared his divine life with us. In Him we are all children of the same Father, and brothers and sisters of each other. The priest cannot fall into the temptation of regarding himself as a mere delegate or simply a representative of the community; rather he is a gift to it by the anointing of the Spirit, and by his special union with Christ the head. "Every high priest is taken from among men and made their representative before God" (Heb. 5:1).

— Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin American and the Caribbean,
Concluding Document, (Aparecida, Brazil, 2007), n. 193

The indispensable role of the priest within the community must lead all the members of the Church in America to recognize the importance of promoting vocations. The American continent has many young people, who represent an immense spiritual resource. Therefore, it is necessary to foster vocations to the priesthood and religious life where they first develop, and Christian families must be invited to support their children if they feel called to follow this path. Vocations "are a gift of God" and "they are born in communities of faith, above all in the family, the parish, Catholic schools and other Church organizations. Bishops and priests are particularly responsible for encouraging vocations by personally presenting the call, and above all by their witness of a life of fidelity, joy, enthusiasm and holiness. The entire People of God is responsible for promoting vocations, and does so chiefly by persistent and humble prayer for vocations."

— Pope Saint John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, n. 40

Behind and before every vocation to the priesthood or to the consecrated life there is always the strong and intense prayer of someone: a grandmother, a grandfather, a mother, a father, a community. ... This is why Jesus said: "Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest," that is, God the Father, "to send out laborers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:38). Vocations are born in prayer and from prayer; and only through prayer can they persevere and bear fruit. ... Let us invoke the intercession of Mary who is the Woman of the "yes". Mary said "yes" throughout her life! She learned to recognize Jesus' voice from the time when she carried him in her womb. May Mary, our Mother, help us to know Jesus' voice better and

better and to follow it, so as to walk on the path of life!

— Pope Francis, *Regina Caeli* (April 21, 2013)

In the family, faith accompanies every age of life, beginning with childhood: children learn to trust in the love of their parents. This is why it is so important that within their families parents encourage shared expressions of faith which can help children gradually to mature in their own faith. Young people in particular, who are going through a period in their lives which is so complex, rich and important for their faith, ought to feel the constant closeness and support of their families and the Church in their journey of faith. We have all seen, during World Youth Days, the joy that young people show in their faith and their desire for an ever more solid and generous life of faith. Young people want to live life to the fullest. Encountering Christ, letting themselves be caught up in and guided by his love, enlarges the horizons of existence, gives it a firm hope which will not disappoint. Faith is no refuge for the fainthearted, but something which enhances our lives. It makes us aware of a magnificent calling, the vocation of love. It assures us that this love is trustworthy and worth embracing, for it is based on God's faithfulness which is stronger than our every weakness.

— Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, 53.

SONG

Here I Am, Lord

1. I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Chorus: Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord.
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.

2. I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them, They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send?

Chorus

3. I, the Lord of wind and flame
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide,
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?

Chorus

Alternative hymns: "Lord, When You Came/Pescador de Hombres"; "Here Am I, O Lord"; "Wherever He Leads."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. How has the witness of priests and religious affected the development of your faith?
2. In what ways are these vocations essential to the Church's life?
3. What benefits — for the individual and for the Church — come with a life set apart by celibacy and obedience?
4. What do you think are the greatest obstacles young people face when they are discerning a vocation?
5. How can Catholic families and parishes help young people to overcome the societal and other obstacles to their vocation?
6. What do you think are the most effective ways to promote awareness of vocations?
7. In what practical ways can you — will you — make a difference in the “culture of vocations”?

STUDY SESSION 6

Priority 3: Fostering Catholic Identity and Cultural Diversity

KEY POINTS

- We are an ethnically diverse people, united by our common faith in Jesus.
- Together in the Church, we are a family.
- Each tradition can enrich all the others. Individuals can learn from cultures different from their own.

SUMMARY

Catholic means “universal” and the Church is meant to be one family of God drawn from all the peoples and nations of the earth. The Church is enriched by its great diversity. The Catholic religion is distinguished by its openness to everyone. Ours is not a national church, or an ethnic church, or a private club based on common interests. It is the one Church willed by God to be his household and his family. In her one tradition are many traditions.

FROM ARCHBISHOP GOMEZ

11. My third priority is to *foster our universal Catholic identity and cultural diversity.*

The encounter with Jesus Christ and his Gospel in Los Angeles has led to a rich communion among diverse indigenous and immigrant cultures. We are uniquely placed at the crossroads of continents — uniting North and South America and opening the Americas to the Caribbean and to Asia and Oceania.

So our local Church will always be shaped by the energies and faith of new peoples from all over the world. In turn, we must make sure that our Church is always a sign of the family of God. The family of God in Los Angeles must always be a sign that God is with us, and that in his loving eyes no one is a stranger to him and we are all brothers and sisters.

In this Year of Faith, let us take a simple practical step to build our sense of communion as the family of God.

We are a family with brothers and sisters drawn from dozens of different ethnic traditions — each with our own particular prayers, devotions, customs and patron saints. Let us begin to try to learn from one another's traditions. And let us look for ways that we can celebrate and share this rich treasury of Catholic pieties and spiritualties with the people of our time.

SCRIPTURE

John 17:20-24

[Jesus said to his Apostles:] "I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me. Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that

where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world."

Saint Paul, Letter to the Ephesians 3:14–15

I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

Revelation 7:9

After this I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne, and from the Lamb."

TEACHING AND TRADITION

The Church is nothing other than "the family of God."

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1655

What is God's plan? It is to make of us all a single family of his children, in which each person feels that God is close and feels loved by him ... feels the warmth of being God's family. The Church is rooted in this great plan. She is not an organization established by an agreement between a few people, but ... is a work of God, born precisely from this loving design which is gradually brought about in history. The Church is born from God's wish to call all people to communion with him, to friendship with him, indeed, to share in his own divine life as his sons and daughters. ... The Church is the great family of God's children.

— Pope Francis, General Audience (May 29, 2013)

Catholic means universal. A complete and clear definition is offered by one of the Fathers of the Church of the first centuries, St Cyril of Jerusalem, when he affirmed: The Church is doubtless "called catholic, meaning universal, because it

extends over all the world, from one end of the earth to the other; and because it teaches universally and completely one and all the truths which ought to come to men's knowledge, concerning things both visible and invisible, heavenly and earthly" (*The Catechesis*, 18:23).

A clear sign of the catholicity of the Church is that she speaks all languages, and this is the very effect of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–13): the Holy Spirit, in fact, enabled the Apostles and the whole Church to cause the Good News of God's salvation and love to spread to all, even to the ends of the earth. ... While the Church was born catholic, that is to say that she was born "outward-bound," that she was born missionary. Had the Apostles remained in the Upper Room, without going out to disseminate the Gospel, the Church would be the Church of only that people, of that city, of that Upper Room. But they all went out into the world, from the moment of the Church's birth, from the moment the Spirit descended upon them. And this is why the Church was born "outward-bound", that is, missionary.

— Pope Francis, General Audience (September 17, 2014)

From the beginning, this one Church has been marked by a great *diversity* which comes from both the variety of God's gifts and the diversity of those who receive them. Within the unity of the People of God, a multiplicity of peoples and cultures is gathered together. Among the Church's members, there are different gifts, offices, conditions, and ways of life. "Holding a rightful place in the communion of the Church there are also particular Churches that retain their own traditions." The great richness of such diversity is not opposed to the Church's unity. Yet sin and the burden of its consequences constantly threaten the gift of unity. And so the Apostle has to exhort Christians to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 814

The new People of God, the Church, is a people that derives from all peoples. The Church is catholic from her beginning and this is her deepest essence. ... The Church must always become anew what she already is; she must open the borders between peoples and break down the barriers between class and race. In her, there cannot be those who are forgotten or looked down upon. In the Church there are only free brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. The wind and

fire of the Holy Spirit must continually break down those barriers that we men and women continue to build between us; we must continually pass from Babel — being closed in on ourselves — to Pentecost. Thus, we must continually pray that the Holy Spirit opens us and gives us the grace of understanding, so that we become the People of God deriving from all peoples.

— Pope Benedict XVI, Homily (May 15, 2015)

At its core the piety of the people is a storehouse of values that offers answers of Christian wisdom to the great questions of life. The Catholic wisdom of the people is capable of fashioning a vital synthesis. ... It creatively combines the divine and the human, Christ and Mary, spirit and body, communion and institution, person and community, faith and homeland, intelligence and emotion. This wisdom is a Christian humanism that radically affirms the dignity of every person as a child of God, establishes a basic fraternity, teaches people to encounter nature and understand work, provides reasons for joy and humor even in the midst of a very hard life. For the people this wisdom is also a principle of discernment and an evangelical instinct through which they spontaneously sense when the Gospel is served in the Church and when it is emptied of its content and stifled by other interests.

— Third General Conference of the Bishops of Latin American and the Caribbean, *Concluding Document*, (Puebla, 1979), 448. See also, Catechism, 1676

In genuine forms of popular piety, the Gospel message assimilates expressive forms particular to a given culture while also permeating the consciousness of that culture with the content of the Gospel, and its idea of life and death, and of man's freedom, mission and destiny. The transmission of this cultural heritage from father to son, from generation to generation, also implies the transmission of Christian principles. In some cases, this fusion goes so deep that elements proper to the Christian faith become integral elements of the cultural identity of particular nations. Devotion to the Mother of the God would be an example of this.

— Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines*, 63

SONG

Holy God, We Praise Thy Name

1. Holy God, we praise thy Name;
Lord of all, we bow before thee!
All on earth thy scepter claim,
all in heaven above adore thee;
infinite thy vast domain,
everlasting is thy reign.

2. Hark! the loud celestial hymn
angel choirs above are raising,
cherubim and seraphim,
in unceasing chorus praising;
fill the heavens with sweet accord:
Holy, holy, holy, Lord.

3. Lo! the apostolic train
join the sacred Name to hallow;
prophets swell the loud refrain,
and the white robed martyrs follow;
and from morn to set of sun,
through the Church the song goes on.

4. Holy Father, Holy Son,
Holy Spirit, Three we name thee;
while in essence only One,
undivided God we claim thee;
and adoring bend the knee,
while we own the mystery.

Alternative hymns: "De Colores"; "All People That on Earth Do Dwell"; "All Are Welcome"; "This Is My Song, O God of All the Nations."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Which ethnic religious customs did you grow up with? Which have you observed in the homes of friends?
2. In what ways do ethnic traditions enrich the parishes you have attended?
3. Can you recall a Catholic ethnic custom you encountered that was foreign to you and took you by surprise?
4. How has your spiritual life been enriched by customs or spiritualties that are foreign to your own ethnic heritage?
5. What are the nationalities of the saints to whom you are most devoted?
6. How does Jesus Christ, ethnically Israelite, manage to unite all peoples? What can we learn from him?
7. What are the advantages of a Church that transcends nationality and nationalism? How might such a Church — or its members — be misunderstood?

STUDY SESSION 7

Priority 4: Promoting the Culture of Life

KEY POINTS

- The human person has a sacred dignity that no one can take away.
- God identifies himself with humanity in Jesus Christ.
- God shows preference to the poor and vulnerable, and so should we.

SUMMARY

Our faith teaches us that every human person is created in God's image. When God took flesh, he chose to share our life. He identified himself with us; and, in a special way, he identified himself with the poor and vulnerable. We do not truly love God unless we love the "least" of our neighbors — those who are cast out by others, rejected, denied dignity, denied work, denied life. The constant refrain of the New Testament is "Love one another." Love must be shown in deeds that fulfill justice. When we work for justice, we bring peace to the place where we live.

FROM ARCHBISHOP GOMEZ

Proclaiming the Culture of Life

12. My fourth priority is that we *proclaim the Gospel of life and promote a culture of life* in our society.

As a Church, we are entrusted with the good news of Jesus Christ — that the human person is sacred and created in the image of God. That is why we fight for the rights of the person from conception to natural death. That is why we strive for justice for the immigrant and the worker, for the imprisoned, the hungry, and the homeless. That is why we defend the rights of the old and the sick to be cared for with love and compassion.

In this Year of Faith, I want to give concrete expression to our witness by expanding the mission of our Archdiocesan Office of Justice and Peace. We will give the office a new name — the Office of Life, Justice and Peace — and we will include within its mission the work of defending innocent life against the threats of abortion and euthanasia.

This move will strengthen every aspect of our Archdiocese's vital social mission — from our many works of charity and service, to our efforts to seek justice for immigrants, workers, the imprisoned, and the poor. This change will also advance our efforts to build a culture of life — because it will demonstrate our belief that the right to life is the foundation of every other right and liberty and the true foundation of justice and peace in society.

In this Year of Faith, each of us must rediscover the importance of the Church's social doctrine and our personal duty as Christians to work for justice and the common good. Our love for Christ demands that we build a society that is more worthy of the dignity of the human person made in the image of God.¹⁵

Again, I recommend that in this Year of Faith, we begin a practical study of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* in our parishes and in our homes.

¹⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:14.

In Jesus Christ, the love of neighbor and the love of God become one. The Christ who comes to us in the Eucharist is the Christ who comes to us always in his most distressing guise — in the poor, the stranger, the immigrant, the prisoner, the unborn. The One who says “This is my Body” also tells us, “As you did it to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me.”¹⁶

This identification of Jesus with the poor and vulnerable is one of the beautiful truths revealed in our religion. In the least of our brothers and sisters, we find Jesus. And when we find Jesus, we find God.

The Church’s works of charity and justice are an essential dimension of the new evangelization. Through our love for others, we bear witness to the reality of our God who is love. Through our work to make this a society of truth and love, we make God’s love for all men and women a reality in our world.

SCRIPTURE

John 10:10

I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.

John 8:12

Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Matthew 25:31–40

[Jesus said:] “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the

¹⁶ Matthew 26:26; 25:31–46.

world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'"

TEACHING AND TRADITION

The Gospel of life is at the heart of Jesus' message. ... Lovingly received day after day by the Church, it is to be preached with dauntless fidelity as "good news" to the people of every age and culture. ... The Church ... feels called to proclaim to the people of all times this "Gospel," the source of invincible hope and true joy for every period of history. The Gospel of God's love for man, the Gospel of the dignity of the person and the Gospel of life are a single and indivisible Gospel. For this reason, man — living man — represents the primary and fundamental way for the Church.

— Pope Saint John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 1, 2

Social justice can be obtained only in respecting the transcendent dignity of man. The person represents the ultimate end of society, which is ordered to him: "What is at stake is the dignity of the human person, whose defense and promotion have been entrusted to us by the Creator, and to whom the men and women at every moment of history are strictly and responsibly in debt."

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1929

One of the gravest risks our epoch faces, amid the opportunities offered by a market equipped with every technological innovation, is the divorce between economics and morality, the basic ethical norms of human nature are increasingly neglected. It is therefore necessary to express the strongest possible opposition to every direct attack on life, especially against the innocent and defenseless, and the unborn in a mother's womb is the example of innocence *par excellence*. Let

us remember the words of the Second Vatican Council: "Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception: abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 51)...

Anyone who is Christian has a duty to bear witness to the Gospel: to protect life courageously and lovingly in all its phases. I encourage you to do this always with closeness, proximity: so that every woman may feel respected as a person, heard, accepted and supported.

We spoke of children: there are so many! But I would also like to speak about their grandparents, the other side of life! Because we must also take care of our grandparents, for both babies and grandparents are the hope of a people: children and young people because they will carry it forward, they will carry the people forward; and grandparents, because they have the wisdom of history, they are the memory of a people. To protect life in an age when babies and grandparents enter this "throw-away" culture and become thought of as disposable material. No! Children and grandparents are the hope of a people!

— Pope Francis, Address (April 11, 2014)

SONG

Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service

1. Lord, whose love in humble service
Bore the weight of human need,
Who upon the cross, forsaken,
Worked your mercy's perfect deed:
We, your servants, bring the worship
Not of voice alone, but heart;
Consecrating to your purpose
Every gift which you impart.

2. Still your children wander homeless;
Still the hungry cry for bread;
Still the captives long for freedom;
Still in grief we mourn our dead.
As you, Lord, in deep compassion
Healed the sick and freed the soul,
By your Spirit send your power
To our world to make it whole.

3. As we worship, grant us vision,
Till your love's revealing light
In its height and depth and greatness
Dawns upon our quickened sight,
Making known the needs and burdens
Your compassion bids us bear,
Stirring us to ardent service,
Your abundant life to share.

Alternative hymns: "Whatsoever You Do"; "Where Charity and Love Prevail"; "Prayer of Saint Francis"; "The Church of Christ in Every Age."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Justice means that we give people what they are due — what they are owed — what is theirs by right. If every person is made in God’s image and redeemed by the blood of Jesus, what do we owe them?
2. What are rights? Who gives rights to people?
3. Do you think justice and rights can be respected apart from faith in God? Why or why not?
4. Who are the most vulnerable persons in our society today? Who is defending their dignity and rights?
5. What can you, your family, and your parish do to make your “societies” more just?
6. Pope Blessed Paul VI said: “If you want peace, work for justice.” What is the relationship between peace and justice? What “work” can we do to bring about justice and peace?
7. What do you find most challenging about the fundamental Christian command to “love one another”?

STUDY SESSION 8

Priority 5: Strengthening Marriage and Family

KEY POINTS

- Marriage is sacred, established by God, and civilization depends upon it.
- Our society is confused about the meaning of marriage.
- The traditional notion of family is central to the Gospel.

SUMMARY

The Archbishop's final pastoral priority is to defend and promote marriage and the family as sacred institutions and the heart of a culture of life and a civilization of love. God has revealed the meaning of marriage, through creation itself and through the Scriptures. For Christians, marriage is sacred and cannot be changed to suit whims, fashions, or consumer desires. Christians must play a key role in renewing marriage and family in our society.

FROM ARCHBISHOP GOMEZ

13. My fifth priority is to *defend and strengthen marriage and the family* based on the permanent and exclusive union of one man and one woman.

Our Church must lead a cultural renewal so that our society will once more see that marriage is sacred and that the family is the true sanctuary of life and the heart of a civilization of love.

We need to do everything we can to restore a “family culture” in our society. That means defending marriage in the face of widespread cultural confusion. That means doing more in our parishes and ministries to support mothers and fathers and families. That means talking to our children, from a very young age, about the beauty and the meaning of marriage and family.

In this Year of Faith, let us deepen our understanding that the Gospel is the good news of God’s “family plan” for history. That is why our Father sent his only Son to be born of his Spirit in a mother’s womb and to be raised in a family with a mother and a father.

We need to deepen our awareness that we are children of God and that our Father calls us to live as brothers and sisters in his family, the Church.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 19:4–6

[Jesus said:] “Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.”

Saint Paul, Letter to the Ephesians 5:25, 28–32

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and handed himself over for her ... So husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the Church, because we are members of his body. "For this reason a man shall leave father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church.

Revelation 19:7–9

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory. For the wedding day of the Lamb has come, his bride has made herself ready. ... Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These words are true; they come from God."

Revelation 21:1–3

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them [as their God].

TEACHING AND TRADITION

It has been said, in a beautiful and profound way, that our God in his deepest mystery is not a solitude, but a family, since he has in himself fatherhood, sonship and the essence of the family, which is love.

— Pope Saint John Paul II, Homily (Puebla, January 28, 1979)

Let us first of all bring to mind the vast semantic range of the word "love": we speak of love of country, love of one's profession, love between friends, love of work, love between parents and children, love between family members, love of neighbor and love of God. Amid this multiplicity of meanings, however, one in particular stands out: love between man and woman, where body and soul are inseparably joined and human beings glimpse an apparently irresistible promise of happiness. This would seem to be the very epitome of love; all other kinds of love immediately seem to fade in comparison.

— Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 2.

On the threshold of his public life Jesus performs his first sign — at his mother's request — during a wedding feast. The Church attaches great importance to Jesus' presence at the wedding at Cana. She sees in it the confirmation of the goodness of marriage and the proclamation that thenceforth marriage will be an efficacious sign of Christ's presence.

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1613.

Christ chose to be born and grow up in the bosom of the holy family of Joseph and Mary. The Church is nothing other than "the family of God." From the beginning, the core of the Church was often constituted by those who had become believers "together with all [their] household." When they were converted, they desired that "their whole household" should also be saved. These families who became believers were islands of Christian life in an unbelieving world.

In our own time, in a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believing families are of primary importance as centers of living, radiant faith. For this reason the Second Vatican Council, using an ancient expression, calls the family the Ecclesia domestica. It is in the bosom of the family that parents are "by word and example . . . the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children. They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each child, fostering with special care any religious vocation." 169

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 1655–1666

Marriage and the family are in crisis today. We now live in a culture of the temporary, in which more and more people reject marriage as a public obligation. This revolution of customs and morals has often waved “the flag of freedom”, but it has, in reality, brought spiritual and material devastation to countless human beings, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. It is ever more evident that the decline of the culture of marriage is associated with increased poverty and a host of other social ills that disproportionately affect women, children and the elderly. It is always they who suffer the most in this crisis.

The crisis of the family has produced a human ecological crisis, for social environments, like natural environments, need protection. Although humanity has come to understand the need to address the conditions that threaten our natural environment, we have been slow — we have been slow in our culture, even in our Catholic culture — we have been slow to recognize that even our social environments are at risk. It is therefore essential that we foster a new human ecology and make it move forward.

— Pope Francis, Address (November 17, 2014)

The family ... is the fundamental cell of society. From the beginning the Creator blessed man and woman so that they might be fruitful and multiply, and so the family then is an image of the Triune God in the world. Our reflections must keep before us the beauty of the family and marriage, the greatness of this human reality which is so simple and yet so rich, consisting of joys and hopes, of struggles and sufferings, as is the whole of life...

Today, the family is looked down upon and mistreated. We are called to acknowledge how beautiful, true and good it is to start a family, to be a family today; and how indispensable the family is for the life of the world and for the future of humanity. We are called to make known God’s magnificent plan for the family and to help spouses joyfully experience this plan in their lives, as we accompany them amidst so many difficulties with a pastoral care that is sound, courageous and full of love.

— Pope Francis, Address (February 20, 2014)

SONG

At Cana's Wedding, Long Ago

(To the tune of "Faith of Our Fathers")

1. At Cana's wedding, long ago,
They knew his presence by this sign,
A virtue none but Christ could show,
To turn their water into wine:
And still on us his blessing be
As in the days of Galilee.

2. What if the way be far to go
And life at times a weary load?
Yet may our hearts within us glow
As theirs on that Emmaus road:
The risen Christ become our guest,
With him to walk, in him to rest.

3. O Lord of all our life below,
O risen Lord of realms above,
Eternal joy be theirs to know,
United in the bond of love:
One in the faith, with one accord,
One with each other and the Lord.

Alternative hymns: "For the Beauty of the Earth"; "Lord of All Hopefulness"; "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Have attitudes toward marriage changed in the course of your lifetime? If so, how? And why?
2. Are any of these changes beneficial to spouses and children? Are any harmful to spouses and children?
3. How do such changes in family life affect neighborhoods, parishes, and cities?
4. How does parenthood change a person? How does it change a marriage?
5. What are the short- and long-term benefits of having children? What are the benefits of having a large family?
6. How does easy divorce change the experience of marriage?
7. Why did God, throughout the whole Bible, use marriage to describe his relationship to his people? How is God's relationship to the Church like a marriage?

STUDY SESSION 9

Tell the Good News!

KEY POINTS

- God has a plan for the evangelization of our region, and each of us has a part to play.
- Each and every Catholic has a duty to evangelize — to witness to Jesus Christ.
- Our work of evangelization must start with our own personal conversion.
- The Blessed Virgin Mary accompanies us and shows us the way.

SUMMARY

God wants Catholics to witness to their faith. He wants us to draw all people together into his family, the Church. By our membership in the Church, this is our duty. Through the sacraments, we are equipped and empowered for the task. Saint Juan Diego and Now-Saint Junípero Serra worked miracles of conversion among their neighbors. We have greater resources than they had — and better technology — and we draw from the same font of grace. With Mary, our Mother, we have all we need to evangelize effectively.

FROM ARCHBISHOP GOMEZ

14. As a sign of our commitment to the new evangelization, in this Year of Faith, I want to establish a new Archdiocesan Office of the New Evangelization. This new office will be responsible for establishing and coordinating our initiatives to spread the Gospel and to increase Catholics' knowledge and love of their faith.

This Year of Faith should be a time in which we examine every area of pastoral life in our great Archdiocese — in our parishes and in all of our ministries. We need to ask ourselves: Is our work leading men and women to Jesus Christ and his Church? Is the Christian faith spreading and is knowledge of the faith deepening through our programs and ministries?

Everything we do must be measured by what it contributes to proclaiming Jesus Christ to the men and women of our day!

15. My dear brothers and sisters, it is time for us to become aware that in God's plan of salvation this local Church has a historic vocation. It is time for us to answer our calling to be co-workers with Jesus Christ — to play our part in the great story of salvation that God is writing in the history of the nations.¹⁷

Now is the time for each of us to get back to what really matters. The new evangelization must begin in your hearts and in mine. We all need a new conversion. Because only the converted heart can lead other hearts to conversion.

Conversion to Jesus Christ is not a single moment or event in our lives. The encounter with Jesus Christ is the beginning of a faith journey. Our relationship with Jesus Christ requires a daily decision to turn our hearts to him, to follow him and imitate him, to get to know him every day in a more intimate way. Conversion is the work of our lifetimes.

In every age and every place, believers have the duty to proclaim the Gospel. The faith we have received, we are called to pass on to others. The love of God we know, we are called to share with others. This is the most basic identity and

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 11:1; Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15, 20; 1 Corinthians 3:9.

responsibility of every Catholic. In our times, our Catholic calling to holiness and mission takes on new urgency.

Our world will return to God — but not by way of words and programs, no matter how eloquent or well conceived. Our world will return to God only by way of witnesses — by way of men and women who testify by the example of their lives that Jesus Christ is real and that his Gospel is the path to true happiness.

Jesus is calling us to be those witnesses, my brothers and sisters.

THE BRIGHT STAR OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

16. Our world is waiting for a new evangelization!

That is why, in marking the tenth anniversary of our Cathedral, we also consecrated a beautiful new chapel to honor Our Lady of Guadalupe. This new chapel contains a precious relic from the miraculous *tilma* that bears the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

This relic has a special meaning for me. Already, at the base of the main altar in our Cathedral, there is a small marble box that contains the relics of twenty-six martyrs and saints from every continent and every period in the history of the Church's mission to the nations. This new relic in our new chapel is a sign to me — and I hope it will be a sign to all of us — that Our Lady of Guadalupe was sent by God to be the bright star at the dawn of the first evangelization of the New World.

When our Blessed Mother appeared to St. Juan Diego outside Mexico City in 1531, it was only a generation after Christopher Columbus and his voyages of discovery. Our Lady's coming inspired a generation of Catholic missionaries — priests, deacons, religious, and lay people. Within decades, they spread faith in Jesus Christ throughout South America and North America, the Caribbean, the Philippines, and deeper into the countries of Asia and Oceania.

So as I conclude this, my first pastoral letter to you, I am asking for Our Lady of Guadalupe's prayers and intercession. I pray that this new chapel will remind us that Mary our Blessed Mother is always with us as the bright star of the new

evangelization. May she inspire us and guide us to fulfill our vocation — to be the new generation of missionaries to our city and our world.

In God's providence, the Year of Faith will conclude on the 300th anniversary of the birth of the great missionary to California, Blessed Junípero Serra, who was born November 24, 1713.

So let us embrace this new moment of grace for our Archdiocese with the zeal and courage of Padre Serra and the first evangelists of the Americas.

Through our witness, let us make this truly a City of the Angels — a city of love and truth, where all can know that God is near in his love, and where the horizons of every life are open to his promise of salvation.

Through the intercession of Our Lady of the Angels, patroness of this great and historic Archdiocese, let us commit ourselves to building on their missionary foundations. By the witness of our lives, let us make America once more a New World of faith!

SCRIPTURE

Luke 24:44–48

He said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. And he said to them, "Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."

Acts 1:6–8

When they had gathered together they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He answered them, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority.

But 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."

TEACHING AND TRADITION

The Church has the great task of guarding and nourishing the faith of the People of God, and reminding the faithful of this Continent that, by virtue of their Baptism, they are called to be disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ. This implies following him, living in intimacy with him, imitating his example and bearing witness. Every baptized person receives from Christ, like the Apostles, the missionary mandate: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized, will be saved" (Mark 16:15)...

The disciple, founded ... upon the rock of God's Word, feels driven to bring the Good News of salvation to his brothers and sisters. Discipleship and mission are like the two sides of a single coin: when the disciple is in love with Christ, he cannot stop proclaiming to the world that only in him do we find salvation (Acts 4:12).

— Pope Benedict XVI, Address (Aparecida, May 13, 2007)

In calling his own to follow him, he gives them a very precise mandate: to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom to all nations (Matt. 23:19; Luke 24:46-48). Hence, every disciple is missionary, for Jesus makes him participate in his mission, while also binding him to himself as friend and brother. Thus, as He is witness to the mystery of the Father, so the disciples are witnesses to the Lord's death and resurrection until He returns. Fulfilling this duty is not an optional task, but an integral part of Christian identity, because it is the witnessing extension of the calling itself.

When awareness of belonging to Christ grows by reason of the gratitude and joy that it produces, the eagerness to communicate the gift of this encounter to all also grows. The mission is not limited to a program or project, but it is sharing the experience of the event of the encounter with Christ, witnessing it and announcing it from person to person, from community to community, and from the Church to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

— Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin American and the Caribbean,
Concluding Document, (Aparecida, Brazil, 2007), n. 144–145

I dream of a “missionary option”, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation.

The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with himself.

— Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 27

Father Serra and his fellow missionaries shared the conviction found everywhere in the New Testament that the Gospel is a matter of life and salvation. They believed that in offering to people Jesus Christ, they were doing *something of immense value*, importance and dignity. What other explanation can there be for the hardships that they freely and gladly endured, like Saint Paul and all the other great missionaries before them: difficult and dangerous travel, illness and isolation, an ascetical life-style, arduous labor, and also, like Saint Paul, that “concern for all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:28) which Junípero Serra, in particular, experienced as *Presidente* of the California missions in the face of every vicissitude, disappointment and opposition.

Dear brothers and sisters: like Father Serra and his Franciscan brethren, we too are *called to be evangelizers*, to share actively in the Church’s mission of making disciples of all people. The way in which we fulfill that mission will be different from theirs. But their lives speak to us still because of their sure faith that the Gospel is true, and because of their passionate belief in the value of bringing that saving truth to others at great personal cost. Much to be envied are those who can give their lives for something greater than themselves in loving service to others. This, more than words or deeds alone, is what draws people to Christ.

This *single-mindedness* is not reserved for great missionaries in exotic places. It must be at the heart of each priest's ministry and the evangelical witness of every religious. It is the key to their personal sense of well-being, happiness and fulfillment in what they are and what they do. This single-mindedness is also essential to the Christian witness of the Catholic laity. The covenant of love between two people in marriage and the successful sharing of faith with children require the effort of a lifetime. If couples cease believing in their marriage as a sacrament before God, or treat religion as anything less than a matter of salvation, then the Christian witness they might have given to the world is lost. Those who are unmarried must also be steadfast in fulfilling their duties in life if they are to bring Christ to the world in which they live.

— Pope Saint John Paul II, Address (Basilica of the Mission of San Carlos in Carmel, September 17, 1987)

Friar Junípero *entrusted his missionary activity to the Blessed Virgin Mary*. We know that before leaving for California, he wanted to consecrate his life to Our Lady of Guadalupe and to ask her for the grace to open the hearts of the colonizers and indigenous peoples, for the mission he was about to begin. In this prayer we can still see this humble brother kneeling in front of the "Mother of the true God," the *Morenita*, who brought her Son to the New World.

The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe was and has been present in the 21 missions that Friar Junípero founded along the coast of California. Since then, Our Lady of Guadalupe has become, in fact, the Patroness of the whole American continent. You cannot separate her from the hearts of the American people. She represents our shared roots in this land, the shared roots of this continent. Indeed, today's mission to the continent is entrusted to her, the first, holy missionary disciple, a constant presence and companion, our source of comfort and hope. For she always hears and protects her American children.

— Pope Francis, Homily (May 2, 2015)

In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (Matt. 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by

professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized.

Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries," but rather that we are always "missionary disciples."

If we are not convinced, let us look at those first disciples, who, immediately after encountering the gaze of Jesus, went forth to proclaim him joyfully: "We have found the Messiah!" (John 1:41). The Samaritan woman became a missionary immediately after speaking with Jesus and many Samaritans come to believe in him "because of the woman's testimony" (John 4:39). So too, Saint Paul, after his encounter with Jesus Christ, "immediately proclaimed Jesus" (Acts 9:20; 22:6–21). So what are we waiting for?

— Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 120

SONG

Sing of Mary

Sing of Mary, pure and lowly,
Virgin mother undefiled,
Sing of God's own Son most holy,
Who became her little child.
Fairest child of fairest mother,
God the Lord who came to earth,
Word made flesh, our very brother,
Takes our nature by his birth.

Sing of Jesus, son of Mary,
In the home at Nazareth.
Toil and labor cannot weary
Love enduring unto death.
Constant was the love he gave her,
Though he went forth from her side,
Forth to preach, and heal, and suffer,
Till on Calvary he died.

Glory be to God the Father;
Glory be to God the Son;
Glory be to God the Spirit;
Glory to the Three in One.
From the heart of blessed Mary,
From all saints the song ascends,
And the Church the strain re-echoes
Unto earth's remotest ends.

Alternative hymns: "Hail, Holy Queen"; "Holy Is His Name"; "Immaculate Mary."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Why does personal conversion make our witness more believable?
2. What advantages do we have that our ancestors in the faith lacked?
3. How is our mission of evangelization different from missions in past generations?
4. What hope can we draw from the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe?
5. How is our faith different because we know Mary's motherly care?
6. How will Mary help in our New Evangelization? How can we call upon her help?
7. How has God, throughout history, made known his will for our country and our people?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Homilies & Commentary | ArchbishopGomez.org

Catholic News | AngelusNews.com

Consecrated Life & Discernment | CalledLA.org

Culture of Life | OneLifeLA.org

Education in the Faith | LACatholicSchools.org

Family of God / Archdiocesan Updates | la-archdiocese.org

New Evangelization | RadiateLA.org

St. Junípero Serra | StJunipero.org

