



DISCIPLESHIP

The Priority of the Entire Church



THE ROOTS OF THE CRISIS — IN THE WORLD

- Western world abandoning its Christian foundations
- “Practical Atheism” – living as if God did not exist.
- Belief systems based on misguided assumptions
 - Scientific Fundamentalism: Belief that all questions about human existence and the world can be answered by experimental science.
 - Moralistic Therapeutic Deism: Be nice – God is around to offer his support when we need him. If he exists, he is uninvolved and does not hold us accountable.
 - Secular Messianism: Political – Gospel subservient to human agendas; Christianity reduced to program of social progress



THE ROOTS OF THE CRISIS — IN THE CHURCH

- Secularization of the Church
 - Human institution
 - Lifestyle enhancer
 - Offer services to improve society
 - Pastor as ecclesiastical civil servant
 - Church conformed to the thinking and behaviors of the culture
- Spiritual Lethargy
 - Overwhelmed by the challenges
 - Burdened – Weary – Discontent – Defeated
 - Need for Repentance and Renewal – Remember our First Love



THE ROOTS OF THE CRISIS — IN THE CHURCH

- Status Quo Mentality
 - Hardened to change
 - Complacent
 - Resistant to renewal
- Fearful
 - Fear of failure – Fear of losing control – Fear of taking risks
 - Fear that prevents us from pursuing Christ's mission is a form of spiritual bondage
- Constant Lament
 - Finding fault with God and others
 - “Murmuring” that leads to discouragement and paralysis



WHAT A RADICALLY MISSION-FOCUSED, DISCIPLE-MAKING CHURCH NEEDS

- Openness to the Spirit – Driving force for evangelism and discipleship
- Apostolic Boldness – Proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Savior, calling others to repentance and New Life in Him
- Spirit of Innovation – Through renewal
- Spirit of Cooperation – We are not competing but creating a more united Christian witness
- Confidence in God – Not our work but His work
- Attitude of Gratitude – Expresses the joy of thankful hearts filled with praise



ESSENTIALS FOR TRANSFORMATION IN BECOMING MISSIONARY DISCIPLES

- Trust the Work of the Holy Spirit to bring reform and renewal
- Repentance and believing must begin with us – re-evangelize those in our pews (congregation)
- Faith is a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and the wonder of His love for us (see Jesus' encounters with others in Scripture)
- Renew this encounter and our romance with Jesus (See Hosea)
- We can only offer others what we have and know through our experience



ESSENTIALS FOR TRANSFORMATION IN BECOMING MISSIONARY DISCIPLES

- Focus on the Kerygma
 - the loving plan of God for human beings;
 - sin and its devastating consequences, especially separation from God;
 - God's answer to our predicament in the sending of his Son for our salvation;
 - the response this gift calls for from every person: to repent of our sins, believe in Jesus and be baptized, so we can be filled with his Holy Spirit and live a new life in his family, the Church.
- Focus of Preaching / Teaching – Interaction within the congregation and on the lips of every missionary disciple as they interact with others



ESSENTIALS FOR TRANSFORMATION IN BECOMING MISSIONARY DISCIPLES

- Witness and Testimony
 - Personal testimony must be integrated more intentionally into the life of the congregation
 - Worship
 - Teaching
 - Training for discipling others
 - Normative conversation
- Incarnational Nature of Christ and His Church – Highly Relational
 - Personal
 - Connected to His Body, the Church
 - No personal relationship to Jesus can exist outside of His Body



ESSENTIALS FOR TRANSFORMATION IN BECOMING MISSIONARY DISCIPLES

- Immersed in the Word of God – Sacred Scripture
 - It is powerful – living and active – changing hearts and minds
 - Through the Word, we know Christ
 - Through the Word, Christ speaks to us personally
 - Promote daily reading, study, discussion – Include the use of Scripture at every occasion in the Church
 - “Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ”
- Renew integration of Confession and Forgiveness as the Scripture exposes our sin – individually and corporately



ESSENTIALS FOR TRANSFORMATION IN BECOMING MISSIONARY DISCIPLES

- Eucharist
 - Discipleship and evangelism always leads us back to “The Meal”
 - It is the fullness of communion and fellowship with Jesus and His Church
 - It is also the source of our zeal and strength to unleash the Gospel
 - The Love we receive in the Sacrament is meant to be shared – It compels us to “Go!” and manifest the Grace we have received



ESSENTIALS FOR TRANSFORMATION IN BECOMING MISSIONARY DISCIPLES

- Intentional equipping of others for the service of the Gospel
- Discipleship formation
- Missionary Disciples – Equipped to evangelize
- Ability to clearly articulate the Kerygma – motivated by love – filled with joy
- Witness for Jesus Christ in every circumstance and in every relationship
- Understanding the Gifts of the Spirit as a unique individual witness that builds up the Body of Christ



ESSENTIALS FOR TRANSFORMATION IN BECOMING MISSIONARY DISCIPLES

- Every congregation is a center for Missionary Discipleship
- Including every pastor and all laity
- Proper understanding of vocation – All believers participate in Christ's mission
- Every ministry within the congregation and every outreach to the community must be intentionally focused on Missionary Discipleship
- Include existing groups
- Include youth and young adults



ESSENTIALS FOR TRANSFORMATION IN BECOMING MISSIONARY DISCIPLES

- Missionary Discipleship is primarily person-to-person or life-to-life relationships
- We must go out and engage, not stay and wait for others to come
- Walk with people – investing time, attention, love and devotion
- Bring healing to the wounded
- Pray for them



ESSENTIALS FOR TRANSFORMATION IN BECOMING MISSIONARY DISCIPLES

- Focus on Families
 - Primary place where discipleship begins – Parents discipling their children
 - Equip parents
 - Home as a center for relationships with neighbors and friends
 - Home as a center for evangelization (“the domestic Church”)
 - Ministry to families
 - Ministry with families
 - Home as a center for public witness



ESSENTIALS FOR TRANSFORMATION IN BECOMING MISSIONARY DISCIPLES

- Community marked by Joy
- Place where all people matter and are highly valued (infinitely)
- Place of Gracious Hospitality (Welcome)
- Known for love of others (Agape – needs of others ahead of self)
- Three Key Traits:
 - Encounter
 - Grow
 - Witness
- Surrounded by Pray
- Relying on the Holy Spirit to overcome Spiritual Oppression



KEY QUOTES

- I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unflinchingly each day.
- Thanks solely to this encounter – or renewed encounter – with God’s love, which blossoms into an enriching friendship, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being.



KEY QUOTES

- Jesus is “the first and greatest evangelizer.” In every activity of evangelization, the primacy always belongs to God, who has called us to cooperate with him and who leads us on by the power of his Spirit.
- The life of the Church should always reveal clearly that God takes the initiative, that “he has loved us first” (1 John 4:19) and that he alone “gives the growth” (1 Cor 3:7). God asks everything of us, yet at the same time he offers everything to us.
- Christians have the duty to proclaim the Gospel without excluding anyone. Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, they should appear as people who wish to share their joy



KEY QUOTES

- “We cannot passively and calmly wait in our church buildings”; we need to move “from a pastoral ministry of mere conservation to a decidedly missionary pastoral ministry.”
- Evangelization takes place in obedience to the missionary mandate of Jesus: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28)
- An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the “smell of the sheep” and the sheep are willing to hear their voice.



KEY QUOTES

- I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the center and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: "You give them something to eat" (Mark 6:37).



KEY QUOTES

- The Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of face-to-face encounters with others, a presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, as well as their joy. True faith in the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, service in the community and reconciliation with others. The Son of God, by becoming flesh, summoned us to the revolution of tenderness. God save us from a worldly Church with superficial spiritual and pastoral trappings! This stifling worldliness can only be healed by breathing in the pure air of the Holy Spirit who frees us from self-centeredness cloaked in an outward religiosity bereft of God. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the Gospel!



KEY QUOTES

- By virtue of their baptism, all the members of the Body of Christ have become missionary disciples (cf. Matt 28:19). All the baptized, regardless of position or instruction, are agents of evangelization. This is not a plan to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful remain passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for the personal involvement of all 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". (Disciples – Samaritan Woman – Paul immediately began to evangelize)



KEY QUOTES

- Discipleship is not isolated self-realization. Discipleship is connected with the mission of reaching others with the Gospel or it is not Missionary Discipleship as Jesus modeled it for the first disciples.
- What kind of love would not feel the need to speak of the beloved, to point him out, to make him known? If we do not feel an intense desire to share this love, we need to pray insistently that He will once more touch our hearts. We need to implore His grace daily, asking Him to open our cold hearts and shake up our lukewarm and superficial existence.



KEY QUOTES

- The sacred Scriptures are the very source of evangelization. Consequently, we need to be constantly trained in hearing the Word. In Word and Sacrament we are nourished and strengthened to offer an authentic witness to the Gospel in daily life. The study of the sacred Scriptures must be a door opened to every believer. It is essential that the revealed Word radically enrich our catechesis and all our efforts to pass on the faith. Evangelization demands familiarity with God's Word, serious ongoing study, prayerful individual and communal reading. We do not blindly seek God, or wait for him to speak to us first, for "God has already spoken, and there is nothing further that we need to know, which has not been revealed to us." Let us receive the sublime treasure of the revealed Word.



KEY QUOTES

- Enthusiasm for evangelization is based on this conviction. We have a treasure of life and love which cannot deceive, and a message which cannot mislead or disappoint. It penetrates to the depths of our hearts, sustaining and ennobling us. It is a truth which is never out of date because it reaches that part of us which nothing else can reach.
- In union with Jesus, we seek what he seeks, and we love what he loves.



THE GOAL

- Every congregation
- Every pastor and all laity are committed to becoming Missionary Disciples
- Encountering Jesus – Growing in the faith – Being a vital witness in every relationship in word and deed
- Focus on life-to-life relationships
- Become a community that nurtures Missionary Discipleship
- Invest our lives in the lives of others – Proclaiming the Gospel with true joy



CREDITS

- *The Joy of the Gospel* by Pope Francis; based on the last Synod and the work of the last three Popes
- *Rediscovering the Heart of a Disciple* by Edward Sri; discussion book based on *The Joy of the Gospel*
- The strategy for Missional Discipleship from the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Detroit
- *Forming Intentional Disciples – The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* by Sherry Weddell
- All Roman Catholics
- What we need is to stop is our resistance to Missional Discipleship based on the pretense that it is not a fit for a Sacramental Church. If it is now the focus for the entire Roman Catholic Church... get over it and let us get on with it!