

## **Talk**

### **The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church**

#### **What is a parish?**

The parish is not an outdated institution because it possesses great flexibility. It is flexible because it is not just a building but a specific community of the faithful.

As a building and as a community the parish, the parish is a sign of the permanent presence of Jesus Christ among his people. It is a beacon that radiates the light of the faith

The parish is an indispensable institution in which we can encounter Christ, and have a living relationship with Him, and with His Church, and with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

#### **What is the mission of the parish?**

So many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation of friendship with Jesus Christ and without a community of faith to support them.

The parish is the fundamental place of proclamation of the Gospel, of the celebration of the Eucharist (and other sacraments), a place of charitable outreach to our brothers and sisters.

We are called to reach out to everyone, to be a place that brings people together and fosters long-term personal relationships.

Our Christian witness should shine out from our parish to the world so that we can gather together the children of God and help them become part of our community.

There is an urgent need for the parish to bring the Good News of life victorious over death and the holy audacity needed to discover new ways to bring this good news to everyone

#### **What is the problem?**

Sometimes, however, we fall victim to a nostalgia for former times as opposed to looking forward to the future with courage.

The parish faces the risk of becoming self-referential, of interest only to small groups, and offering services that do not express the dynamic of evangelisation.

The current model of a parish does not always correspond adequately to the needs and expectations even of the faithful, let alone those who have not yet found faith.

#### **How do we go forward**

Evangelisation is the cornerstone of all pastoral action so we must renew our "traditional" Parish structures in terms of mission.

We must constantly face up to the changes facing the Church in today's culture, especially increased mobility, the digital culture and the dissolution of interpersonal relationships.

We must find ways of doing things that can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for the self-preservation of our parish.

However, we must not act "hastily" to bring about immediate reforms which may actually be to the detriment of those we serve.

### **What is the role of the laity?**

Each one of us who is baptised, by virtue of the gift of the Holy Spirit, should be an active participant in the work of evangelisation.

The vocation of every baptised Catholic is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and a missionary of the Gospel.

We must be men and women who give credibility to what we say through the witness of our lives.

We should all order our everyday lives according to the plan of God so that all our human activity may be transformed by the Gospel.

But we should also feel responsible for, and be involved in caring for the needs of the Church in a variety of ways and in a spirit of solidarity.

### **What is the role of the Parish Pastoral Council**

A Parish Priest cannot guide without pastoral councils because the pastoral care of the parish requires the contribution of all the baptised.

Far from being simply a bureaucratic organ, the parish pastoral council is a consultative body that effectively represents the community of which it is an expression.

Every baptised Catholic has the right and duty to express to their parish priest their own thoughts concerning the good of the Parish community.

The Parish Priest must consider the indications of the Pastoral Council attentively, especially if, in a process of common discernment, it expresses itself unanimously.

It should consist of those who are concretely engaged in the pastoral life of the Parish so that the meetings do not become just an exchange of abstract ideas.

Success is measured not by completing "projects" that are good but abstract, but by initiatives that meet the real needs of the faithful, especially the poor and needy.