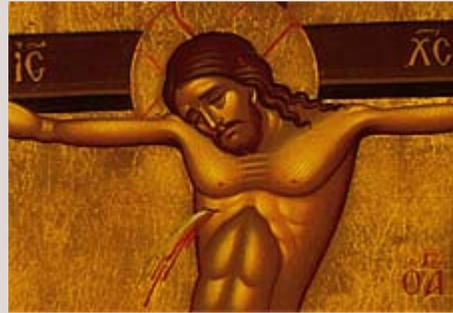


EVANGELICAL ROLE OF CHARITY

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The evangelical role of charity is foundational for evangelization. So much at the foundation that charity is one of the only three evangelical vows made but every religious and observed by all Catholics. As the Apostle Paul tells us; "Faith, hope and charity abide, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Cor. 13:13, Ignatius). Without charity at the foundation, Paul continues, "I have nothing." All efforts to save, heal, comfort, and assist without love will also amount to nothing or will have no lasting effect. Love and Charity must be the driving force and intention for evangelization. This love for others must be rooted in a love for God. Only then will one have the strength to show charity to others, precisely because God provides the strength to love others as he loves them. "This love of God both excites and energizes that love of one's neighbor which contributes to the salvation of the world and the building up of the Church. This love, in addition, quickens and directs the actual practice of the evangelical counsels." The love that God loves each of His children with is the same love which one must love others with, enough to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with them. But one cannot not obtain God's love for others on his or her own rather, one must go to God humbly and ask Him for this love for others.



Additionally, the practical strategies for evangelization begin with how one lives and witnesses to the charity of God in and with one's own life. Before one is able to proclaim Christ to others he or she witnesses to them by the manner in which they live. "The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission." There may be many people that an evangelist will never be able to speak to and proclaim Christ in words but by the example of how they live they may share Christ message. As St. Francis of Assisi said, "Preach always and when necessary use words." When one lives according to the logic of the Gospel and not the world, it causes others to question and wonder at their own way of life. These questions provide an opportunity to give a reason for your hope and to proclaim the good news. "In the complex reality of mission, initial proclamation has a central and irreplaceable role, since it introduces man 'into the mystery of the love of God, who invites him to enter into a personal relationship with himself in Christ' and opens the way to conversion." Therefore this proclamation serves as a means for one to be introduced to the God who loves them. From this proclamation in charity the initial stages of conversion will hopefully spring forth leading to baptism. Charity must be present; if it is out of love and for love that one is sharing Love itself it naturally should be done in a loving manner.

Our greatest model is Jesus, whom God the Father send to us to show us the merciful love of the Father. At the foundation of the mission of Christ is love, His and the Father's love for humanity. "It (Charity) is the principle which must direct every action, and end to which that action must be directed." Therefore the reason for our evangelization and the driving force behind it should be love of God and love of neighbor.

¹Pope Paul VI, The Adaption and Renewal of Religious Life, Perfectae Caritatis, (1965), 6

²Pope John Paul II, On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate, Redemptoris Missio, (1990), 42

³Redemptoris Missio, 44

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