

October 20: Pope Francis Speaks on Mission

Catholics celebrate World Mission Sunday today; we carefully explore Pope Francis' message written for the occasion. In addition, we can profitably explore numerous profound insights on mission found in *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*, Pope Francis' first apostolic exhortation. Here Francis is proposing a profound missionary renewal of the entire Church. He asserts that we need an "evangelizing Church that comes out of herself," *not* a Church that is "self-referential" and "lives within herself, of herself, for herself" (EG 27).

Pope Francis' writes: "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.... All renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion" (EG 27).

"Missionary outreach is *paradigmatic for all the Church's activity*.... We need to move 'from a pastoral ministry of mere conservation to a decidedly missionary pastoral ministry'" (EG 15). "I want to emphasize that what I am trying to express here has programmatic significance and important consequences.... Throughout the world, let us be 'permanently in a state of mission'" (EG 25).

A pivotal insight of Pope Francis is that "we are all missionary disciples" (EG 119); through baptism, "all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples" (EG 120). All Christians are "agents of evangelization." "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'" (EG 120). Francis asserts: "Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary vigor" (EG 109).