



Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales HOME MISSION SUNDAY: 21 SEPTEMBER 2014

LITURGICAL MATERIALS

Supporting ministry and outreach to non churchgoing (lapsed) Catholics

INTRODUCTION TO MASS

Today is Home Mission Sunday – the day annually when we are invited to pray for and support the Church's work of Evangelisation in England and Wales.

The theme this year is *Evangelisation 'in the heart of the family'*. We are reminded that the work of evangelisation begins within our own families - in our own homes - and also within the spiritual family of our parish. As we listen to today's Scripture readings during Mass, the Bishops ask that we reflect very especially on how the Lord might be calling us to reach out to those that we know, in our home and parish family, who are non churchgoing (lapsed) Catholics.

HOMILY NOTES

1) MYSELF

'Charity begins at home' they say. So does evangelisation. We have to start with oneself: yourself, myself. As Baptised Christians we evangelise best by our witness in our daily lives: generously helping someone in need, for example, or not drinking alcohol in Lent when you go out with workmates to the pub on a Friday, or a teenager having the courage to come to Mass on a Sunday despite his or her friends' mockery.

To do this we have to renew our own conversion constantly. As Pope Francis says, "I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ ... The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk" (*Evangelii Gaudium* 3). So take some time to reflect on your relationship with Christ. Do you devote time to prayer? Is your lifestyle "worthy of the Gospel of Christ" (Second Reading)? Do you witness daily to Christ, in big things or in small things?

2) THE FAMILY

Secondly, we need to reflect on our family life. We would all agree with Pope Francis that “the family is experiencing a profound cultural crisis” (*EG 66*).

Every Christian family should try to follow two models: the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and the Holy Trinity. The Holy Family had its difficulties - persecution by King Herod, losing Jesus aged 12, etc. - but despite them Mary, Joseph and Jesus loved one another and each tried to follow God’s will for them. The Holy Trinity is three persons, bound together in love, and this same unity in love should be displayed at the heart of the Christian family.

So, parents: how do you pass on the faith to your children, and are you transmitting God’s values to them? Children: what do you do to help, not obstruct, family life? What can you do to make the world a better place? Everyone: how can we overcome our difficulties, and show love and joy? As members of a family we evangelise best by our witness in our daily lives: coming to Mass every Sunday as a family, praying together as a family, working together as a family, like the workers in the parable, for the kingdom of God.

3) THE PARISH [OR CHAPLAINCY]

Thirdly, we need to reflect on the life of the family which is our parish. “The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelisers” (*EG 28*).

As a parish we evangelise best by our witness in our daily lives: [here the preacher might mention good local examples of social outreach, of mission, of parish groups, schools, etc.]. Above all, is this parish as welcoming as the landowner in the parable? And if the parish were to suddenly disappear, would the local community notice?

4) NON CHURCHGOING CATHOLICS: LAPSED

Fourthly, we are called to reach out to “the baptised whose lives do not reflect the demands of Baptism, who lack a meaningful relationship to the Church and no longer experience the consolation born of faith” (*EG 15*).

“Many children and young people today will never see their parents receive the sacraments,” we are reminded in the preparatory document for the forthcoming Synod on the Family in Rome. Research suggests that an estimated 80% of Catholics in England and Wales rarely or never attend Mass. Again, we evangelise best by our witness in our daily lives. Instead of being judgemental like the grumblers in the parable, we do better to try to find out why they are not participating in the community of faith, to find ways of attracting them back to the practice of the faith, and to be welcoming when they do return. Reaching out to members absent from the heart of the parish family is a key focus of this Home Mission Sunday. People do re-connect, they do come back, if invited.

CONCLUSION

So four ways of responding to today’s Gospel – in our lives, in our families, in our parishes and by reaching out to non churchgoing Catholics. We have to be like the workers in the parable in today’s Gospel. We have to allow ourselves to be called by God to whatever acts of witness he wants from us. Pope Francis: evangelisation “is first and foremost the Lord’s work, surpassing anything we can see and understand... In every activity of evangelisation, the primacy always belongs to God, who has called us to co-operate with him and who leads us on by the power of his Spirit” (*EG 12*).

FOR THE NOTICES

The Bishops of England and Wales ask that every parish prays for the work of Home Mission (evangelisation) today. The second collection is to support the development of new ways of reaching out to the estimated 4 million non churchgoing (lapsed) Catholics. Please be as generous as you can. The collection enables the Bishops to pursue a breadth of projects in service of Home Mission – websites, outreach projects, research initiatives, campaign materials, and much more. Please do pick up the free Home Mission Sunday postcard as you leave church today. Your support through prayer, and generous giving, will make a difference to people’s lives.

SUGGESTED INCLUSIONS FOR THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL (BIDDING PRAYERS)

- For Francis our Pope, *N* our Bishop, and everyone in our diocese, and for the work done nationally in support of evangelisation: that we may respond on this Home Mission Sunday to Christ's call and spread the Gospel with joy.
- For our parish, especially for the Baptised who no longer or rarely attend Church: that our witness of transfigured lives in Christ will draw more people into an active participation in our parish.

These liturgical resources were written by Fr David Gibbons, Director of the Archdiocese of Southwark Centre for Catholic Formation in Tooting Bec. www.ccftootingbec.org.uk

MASS READINGS FOR HOME MISSION SUNDAY

Please visit: <http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Calendar/Sunday/OT5Sunday.shtml#OT25>

Thank you for your support and God bless you.

Bishops' Conference Department for Evangelisation and Catechesis

Home Mission Sunday is resourced by the Bishops' Conference Home Mission Desk in service of the Department for Evangelisation and Catechesis. Email: homemission@cbcew.org.uk