

# Proclaim'15

building missionary parishes



## COMPANION FOR THE JOURNEY

**“With Christ joy is constantly born anew...** I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark on a new chapter of evangelisation marked with this joy, while pointing out new paths for the Church’s journey in years to come.” (*Evangelii Gaudium* 1). These words of Pope Francis are addressed to us all. Through the Proclaim '15 initiative, we are invited to respond generously to the Holy Father’s request to make a new beginning in support of the building of missionary parishes. This ongoing missionary task takes us on an exciting, inspiring and, at times, challenging journey with the Lord. The Proclaim '15 resources provided have been produced as a **companion** to support you in the confident sharing of the joy of the Gospel, in your own way, at your own pace, according to the individual needs of your parish and community.

### CHRIST at the CENTRE

**“...someone who listens and does nothing is like the man who built a house on soil, with no foundations; as soon as the river bore down on it, it collapsed; and what a ruin that house became!”** Luke 6: 49  
These challenging words speak directly to those seeking to evangelise effectively. The Scriptures teach us again and again that Christ must be the source of all our endeavours if we are to successfully build local missionary communities and parishes. The parish missionary journey is always a movement for and with Christ – from him and to him.

## How to use this resource

This resource was produced as a fruit of the **Proclaim '15 National Catholic Evangelisation Conference** in Birmingham on 11 July 2015. It captures key ideas, practical tips and learning taken from workshops that were delivered on the day to enable your local Catholic community to take new steps in service of parish mission. There are eleven packs in total, each offering insights and tips from a particular workshop. You are invited to explore the workshop topics, reflect how these will be beneficial to your parish and then consider the following:

- **Share this information with others in your parish - you are welcome to photocopy all the materials provided here**
- **Say the Proclaim '15 prayer together**
- **Choose one or two of the topics provided as a focus for your parish’s mission**
- **Read and discuss the *Learning from Pope Francis* text provided in each pack**
- **Decide some new steps that you will take locally in response to what you read.**



# PRAYER

## Your Constant Companion



### Food and Fuel for the Journey

Throughout Jesus's public ministry we observe that prayer was central to his life and mission. He frequently withdrew to pray. He taught his disciples how to pray, so that they would not only experience God's love and mercy, but would be fed spiritually for the great work of evangelisation that was being asked of them. Two thousand years on, it is the same for us today. We are also invited to recommit to the life of prayer as food and fuel for our journey with the Lord, and so become missionary disciples. This theme is repeated in all the Proclaim '15 resources.

### Start with Prayer

It is no coincidence that Cardinal Vincent Nichols (Westminster) made prioritising prayer a central theme of his keynote address at the Proclaim '15 National Catholic Evangelisation Conference, saying: "To understand our mission then we have to go to the heart of God, the very mystery of the Holy Trinity, the inner life of God. This is spoken of as the Divine *'communio'* – the sharing within the mystery of the persons of God of divine life, love, truth, goodness and beauty. Only from within that inner heart of God does our mission arise. Only from that inner heart of God does our mission find its shape, its purpose, its energy. We are to do something beautiful; something that is of God; something that is for God. So, our mission always starts in our prayer, flows from prayer, from our daily openness to the great mystery of the life of God. It cannot start anywhere else."

Proclaim '15 Conference, 11 July 2015

### Pray Before You Do

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) we read: "The Gospel according to St Luke emphasises the action of the Holy Spirit and the meaning of prayer in Christ's ministry. Jesus prays before the decisive moments of his mission: before his Father's witness to him during his Baptism and Transfiguration, and before his own fulfillment of the Father's plan of love by his Passion. He also prays before the decisive moments involving the mission of his apostles: at his election and call of the Twelve, before Peter's confession of him as 'the Christ of God,' and again that the faith of the chief of the Apostles may not fail when tempted. Jesus' prayer before the events of salvation that the Father has asked him to fulfill is a humble and trusting commitment of his human will to the loving will of the Father." (CCC 2600)

### Proclaim Prayer

**Please join Catholics all over England and Wales in making a humble and trusting commitment to the Lord by saying the Proclaim '15 prayer for the building of missionary parishes:**

**Loving Father,  
you so loved the world that you sent us  
your only Son, that we might believe in  
him and have eternal life.**

**May we encounter Jesus Christ anew this  
day and live the Good News with joy.**

**Through the power of your Holy Spirit,  
help us to "go out to the whole world and  
proclaim" our faith with confidence.**

**Give us the courage to witness to the Joy  
of the Gospel by our words and actions.**

**Help our parish to become more  
welcoming and missionary, so that you  
may be known and loved by all people.**

**We make this prayer through Our Lord  
Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns  
with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for  
ever and ever, Amen.**

**Our Lady, Star of the New Evangelisation,  
Pray for us.**

**Blessed John Henry Newman, Pray for us.  
St Thérèse of Lisieux, Pray for us.**

**Be persevering in your prayers  
and be thankful as you stay  
awake and pray.**

Colossians 4:2

## KEYS TO BECOMING A MISSIONARY PARISH

**Key****CALLED AND CHOSEN**

Remember that God has called and chosen you to share the Good News of the Gospel. He is inviting you every day to be renewed through a personal encounter with his Son, Jesus Christ.

**Key****ALWAYS PRAY**

Prayer should underpin the start, middle and end points of your missionary efforts. Prayer will sustain you throughout your journey.

**Key****GOD IS PRESENT**

Your journey to becoming a missionary parish is not a search for Jesus; you are being called to walk alongside him. He is already here. Everywhere. All the time. He is your constant companion.

**Key****SHARE THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL**

The Gospel is the Word of the Lord. Be mindful of, and respect it, at all times. Read the Gospel, reflect upon it and be confident in sharing it joyfully with others.

**Key****INVITE OTHERS ON THE JOURNEY**

Be open to everyone and invite them to join you on the journey of faith in a welcoming, friendly and non-judgemental way. Create opportunities for people to engage in ways that are appropriate to them and their needs.

**Key****LOVE IN ACTION**

A loving action always bears fruit. God acts through you in every act of kindness great or small. Remember to live the message openly by being joyful when you help others.

**Key****SIMPLE ACTS DONE WELL**

St Thérèse of Lisieux reminds us there is great evangelising power in simplicity. Avoid over complicating things and focus instead on doing simple things in the best possible way.

**Key****COMMUNICATION**

Think about how the world is communicating today. If needed, enlist the help of those with "know how" to embrace and make the most of new media (e.g. website, Facebook, Twitter).

# SHARING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

## Learning from Pope Benedict XVI

“*Caritas Christi urget nos*’ (2 Corinthians 5:14): it is the love of Christ that fills our hearts and impels us to evangelise. Today as in the past, he sends us through the highways of the world to proclaim his Gospel to all the peoples of the earth (cf. Matthew 28:19). Through his love, Jesus Christ attracts to himself the people of every generation: in every age he

convoques the Church, entrusting her with the proclamation of the Gospel by a mandate that is ever new. Today too, there is a need for stronger ecclesial commitment to new evangelisation in order to rediscover the joy of believing and the enthusiasm for communicating the faith. In rediscovering his love day by day, the missionary commitment of believers attains force and vigour that can never fade away. Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy. It makes us fruitful, because it expands our hearts in hope and enables us to bear life-giving witness: indeed, it opens the hearts and minds of those who listen to respond to the Lord’s invitation to adhere to his word and become his disciples.”

Pope Benedict XVI, 2011 Apostolic Letter, *Porta Fidei*, 7



### Tip

## READ A GOSPEL

Familiarise yourself with the Gospels by reading them again, paying special attention to how Jesus responded to the people whom he met. Start with Mark’s Gospel and consider what you can learn about how to evangelise from the encounters that Jesus had with people.



### Tip

## MEMORISE

Memorise the basic Gospel message summarised by Pope Francis, “Jesus Christ loves you, died for you, and walks with you every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.” Notice the many and varied ways Jesus demonstrates this message in the Gospels. We can not evangelise remote from the example Jesus gave us or the power of His Spirit working through us.



### Tip

## GENTLY DOES IT

Begin by letting people experience your kindness, warmth, hospitality, a listening ear and gentle conversation, in neutral and non-threatening places, just as Jesus did.



### Tip

## LISTEN FOR THE PROMPT

When sharing the Gospel message spend more time listening to others than speaking. Wait for people to ask you questions. As appropriate, pose a question to them.



### Tip

## CONVERSION TAKES A LIFETIME

Conversion is gradual and ongoing and, for most, is a one step at a time experience; sometimes slow, sometimes rapid. Avoid asking someone to take three steps when they are able to make only one. Sherry Weddell’s book, *Forming Intentional Disciples*, offers a good introduction to the carefully defined stages of conversion.

# SHARING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE



## Tip

### BE REAL

Everyone experiences doubt, confusion and struggles in the living of the Christian life. To pretend that the journey of faith is easy can make people feel inadequate. Recognise struggles and challenges. Empathise rather than dismiss the hurdles faced, but in your faith-sharing aim to leave people feeling inspired, encouraged and hope-filled.



## Tip

### STORIES HELP

Jesus taught using stories and posing profound questions. He often left people to work it out. Use the Gospel parables and learn to tell your own stories. Challenge people by helping them to think differently rather than offering overly simple responses to complicated anxieties.



## Tip

### MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

Watch out for clichés, lengthy academic or religious jargon. Notice how simple and profound are the expressions of Pope Francis. Try to avoid complicating the basic unconditional message of God's eternal love for creation.



## Tip

### KEEP PRAYING

Pray for the person you are encouraging and, should they appear open to it, offer to pray with them. Be surprised by how wonderful and blessed an experience of praying with people can turn out.



## Tip

### BE READY TO INVITE

Dare to offer an invitation! Ask: "Have you thought about becoming a Christian?" "Would you come with me to our church?" "Would you like to come with me to a meeting where we talk about these things?"

## Learning from Pope Francis

"In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Matthew 28:19). All the baptised, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelisation, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelisation to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelisation calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptised. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelisation; 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."

Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 120