

The Missionary Dimension of Priestly Eucharistic Life



Fr. Roger J. Landry • Archdiocese of Philadelphia Clergy Days • October 9-10, 2024



The Missionary Dimension of the Eucharistic Life of the Priest

- The National Eucharistic Revival of the Church in the United States is designed to help reform the Church in the United States in a Eucharistic, and therefore Christocentric, key. It's not a program but a new Pentecost.
- The National Eucharistic Pilgrimage was meant to take Jesus out of our Churches into the world he redeemed, to encounter those whom he does not ordinarily encounter within those places erected to celebrate and house the Eucharistic mystery.
- Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization, said in Indianapolis:
 - “Eucharistic conversion” is “missionary conversion.” In the Eucharistic Jesus, self-gift and mission are united.
 - “A Eucharistic people is a missionary and evangelizing people.”

The Missionary Dimension of the Eucharistic Life of the Priest

- Everything in Catholic life starts from the source, summit, root and center of the Christian life, the Mass.
- Priests are instructed to imitate what we celebrate and model our life on the mystery of the Lord's Cross, actualized in the celebration of the Mass.
- Christ in every age calls us to mission, to bring not just his words, but him, to everyone.
 - JP II: **"All priests must have the mind and the heart of missionaries**, open to the needs of the Church and the world." A missionary spirit is a "catholic" spirit.
 - "As the Father sends me, so I send you" (Jn 20:21)
 - "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19)
 - "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (1 Cor 9:16).



Eucharistic Missionary Transformation

- We have been speaking for 45 years about the “new evangelization,” and almost as long about going from “maintenance to mission,” but it has not yet come close to transforming our ecclesial institutions.
- Pope Francis speaks of a “missionary impulse capable of transforming everything.” He poignantly asks, “What would happen if we took these words seriously?”
- He wants each of us to grasp that the Church — and each of us — don’t have a mission but are the continuation of Christ’s mission.
- Every altar, every tabernacle, every Church is meant to become a “missionary hub.”
- But this movement from of the Holy Spirit toward a new Pentecost must become concrete and practical.





Some of the Challenges We Face

- Six Catholics are leaving the practice of the faith for every convert.
- The rise of the “nones.”
- Only one of six Catholics attends Mass on each Lord’s day; at most half professes Catholic Eucharistic teaching.
- Since Covid, Sunday Mass attendance is down anywhere from 10-33 percent.
- Since 2014, total active diocesan priests are down 9 percent; religious by 14 percent; priestly ordinations by 24 percent; seminarians by 22 percent; one third of priests in the US are retired.



Some of the Challenges We Face

- Baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations, Marriages and Diaconal Ordinations are all statistically down. Same is true in many places about confessions and anointings.
- Many Catholic elementary schools, high schools and parishes are no longer self-sustaining and are needing to close or merge.
- Hospitals and many of the Church's charities are struggling, surviving by outside support.
- The clergy sexual abuse crisis has severely wounded the credibility of the Church, of priests in general, of bishops and even of the Pope.
- There is growing secularization such that many are no longer growing up with even the most minimal cultural Catholicism.



Some Sources of Hope

- Alongside the concerns, but we're seeing seeds, buds and flowers of a new springtime.
- Some dioceses, particularly in the Southwest, are expanding quickly thanks to OCIA and immigration.
- The rise of various great, mainly lay led, new evangelization organizations.
- Some thriving programs for youth and young adults.
- Great hunger for Eucharistic adoration seen in various parishes and among the young.
- The rise and thriving of various religious orders and movements doing well in terms of vocational numbers, formation and impact.

What's Needed to Respond to the Moment

- A reform of structures and ways of doing things into a more missionary key is certainly needed, like is happening here in Philadelphia.
- We know from Church history, however, that every major reform and rebirth happened fundamentally through new men and new women.
- More important than a reform of structures is a reform of those in the structures. “Personnel is policy.”
- There's a particular need for this missionary metamorphosis in those entrusted by the Lord to help lead his Church. Can — and will — we develop whatever habits need to change?
- The leaders need missionary hearts, missionary heads, missionary zeal and stamina.





The Response of Saints

- When we look at the history of the Church, we see that in every crisis the Church has faced, the Lord has raised up saintly figures to help lead the comeback and renew the Church.
- It would be helpful for us to imagine how a few great priestly figures would look at the situation today.
 - St. Francis Xavier — What appeal would he make to the Sorbonne of our day? How would he work our part of the vineyard?
 - St. Francis de Sales — He signed up for the toughest of assignments nine months after his ordination. How would he address our Chablais?
 - St. John Vianney — How would he go out after the non-practicing on Sunday in our parish?
 - St. John Neumann — How would this missionary and fourth bishop of Philadelphia try to integrate various ethnic groups, renew Catholic schools, and lead everyone to draw hope from the Eucharistic Jesus in 40 hours or more?



Returning to the Foundations

- The most important re-envisioning that we leaders need, however, is to go back to the foundations of the priesthood.
- Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests: **“We must rekindle in ourselves the impetus of the beginnings and allow ourselves to be filled with the ardor ... that followed Pentecost.”**
- Sometimes we can complain: “I wasn’t trained for this.” To some degree, that is obviously true with respect to changing pastoral paradigms. But at the same time, Jesus did give us many of the virtues we would need to adapt to any situation in the formation he gave his first priests.



Returning to the Foundations

- Formation of the first priests: “He appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach” (Mk 3:14).
- They were with Jesus full-time, as he prayed, journeyed, preached, taught, healed, exorcised. Jesus called them apart to be with him.
- Then he sent them out, giving them instructions.

Jesus' Apostolic Instructions Given to the 12 and the 72

- Pray to the Harvest Master
- Need for Laborers
- The Message: “The Kingdom of God is at hand.”
- Say, “Peace!”
- Two by two





Jesus' Apostolic Instructions Given to the 12 and the 72

- Authority to cure the sick and cast out demons
- Lambs among wolves
- Focused, not being diverted along the way.
- Dependent on God's providence: no money, sack, second tunic, walking stick or food.
- Sent them out to be received. To stay. To eat.
- Prepared them to be rejected.

Jesus Calls Us First To Be With Him

- He does so in a special enduring way in the Eucharist.
- He wants to spend time with us and wants us to prioritize time with him and center our existence around him. This is the source of true priestly vitality.
- “One thing necessary” and “the better part”
- B16: Men, Models and Masters of Prayer



Jesus Calls Us First To Be With Him

- JP II: “Learning the Trinitarian shape of Christian prayer and living it fully, above all in the liturgy, the summit and source of the Church’s life, but also in personal experience, is the secret of a truly vital Christianity.”
- Jesus’ revelations to St. Margaret Mary 350 years ago.
- *In Sinu Iesu*





Jesus Wants To Send Us Out

- Not just with words but with the Word-made-flesh
- B16 on priestly consecration.
cum+sacer+dos.



Our Mission Today

- Still involves prayer — prayer of 2000 years for us. Our prayer for other *laborers*. The Eucharistic dimension of that prayer and to see how those praying are called. Why St. Thérèse is co-patroness of the Missions!
- The Kingdom is at hand because the King is here, reigning humbly in the Eucharist.
- Peacemakers, especially through the forgiveness of sins. Extending Jesus' gift of peace.
- To care for the suffering and those harassed and enslaved by the evil one. “Deliver us from evil.”
- Lambs among wolves. Learn meekness and humility from Jesus in the Eucharist



Our Mission Today

- A clear and urgent mission to accomplish: glorification of God, salvation and sanctification of others, helping them come to Jesus.
- Trust in God's providence. Spiritual poverty. Have we become enslaved to our stuff: devices, buildings, websites, personnel, and infrastructure? The first priests were sent out with no suitcases, lunch, vehicles, cash or credit cards, second cassocks, albs and lay clothes. Would we dare to be so dependent on God today? If God the Father gives us the Eucharist each day, will he not give us everything else besides?
- Two-by-two but united as “one Body, one Spirit in Christ.”

Our Mission Today

- Sends us out to be received.
- Radical experience of hospitality on the NEP, in dioceses, parishes, rectories, and so many homes. Eating what was set before us!
- We can think of our mission as fundamentally proclamation, the celebration of the sacraments, of charity, but at a profound level, it's of receptivity. That's why we have to go out! To meet people where they are and creatively engage them.
- We — and he and the Father — will occasionally, even often, be rejected. Shouldn't be afraid and shouldn't be too discouraged, but dust ourselves off and move on.



Proclaiming the Kingdom Today

- To proclaim the Kingdom effectively today, we need to remember some of the lessons Jesus taught us in the Gospel.
- The eight parables of the Kingdom in Mt 13.
- Why Jesus taught in parables.





The Parables of the Kingdom

- Parable of the Sower and the Seed
- Parable of the Weeds and the Wheat
- Parable of the Mustard Seed
- Parable of the Yeast
- Parables of the Buried Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price
- Parable of the Dragnet
- Parable of the Head of the Household.



Other Unexpired Revelations About the Kingdom

- “The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel.”
- Must be born from above, of water and spirit.
- Tax collectors and prostitutes entering before the Scribes and Pharisees
- Everyone who enters must do so with violence
- Seek it first and everything else will be given to us besides.
- Belongs to those like little children. To enter it, we must convert and become like children.
- Belongs to the poor in spirit. It’s harder for the rich to enter than for a camel to pass through a needle’s eye



Other Unexpired Revelations About the Kingdom

- Unfit if we set our hands to the plow and look back
- Must care for those in need, hungry, thirsty, stranger, etc.
- A wedding banquet for which we must show up well dressed!
- Landowner who went out to hire laborers
- Some renounce marriage for the sake of the kingdom
- Virgins with lighted lamps
- Persecuted for doing the right thing



The Present Day

- We are grateful for all the growth of the Church over the centuries, the organization that has made it possible for us to proclaim the Word, celebrate the Sacraments and love our neighbor, like our parishes, schools, hospitals, charitable centers and more. These are great and impressive testimonies to faith.
- In every age, however, we are called to examine whether we need new wineskins to receive what the Lord wants to pour into us.



The Present Day

- At every time, the Lord says to us what he said to Giovanni Bernardone in Assisi, “Frances, rebuild my Church!” We know like him that the Church is not fundamentally buildings, but living stones built into a spiritual edifice on Christ the cornerstone.
- In every age, we’re called to proclaim the Kingdom of God with freshness and ask whether our structures are serving us and our mission rather than we are preserving them.



The Present Day

- We are living in a missionary age. Because of the secularizing trends of ubiquitous means of social communication, mission proper, new evangelization and the pastoral care of the faithful share many of the same elements. We must be prepared for mission and live for mission.
- The life of missionary priests are like the first apostles, who needed the freedom and urgency to pray, to proclaim the Word and to celebrate the sacraments.



The Present Day

- That's still the situation in missionary countries, where priests are constantly doing what Jesus did in the Gospel, going from one place to another. One priest friend in South Sudan had 108 different chapels for which he was responsible.
- What grounds them is not one base of operations understood as a building or headquarters. It's the Lord. Their missionary life is rooted in the Eucharist, in Christ who is the same yesterday, today and forever, and the same from one missionary station to the next.



The Present Day

- The National Eucharistic Procession reminded us all that the we are a “pilgrim Church on earth.” The Church is fundamentally a “Eucharistic procession” walking with the Lord Jesus all the way to the heavenly Jerusalem.
- Parishes are meant ultimately to be “stations” where we are strengthened for the journey.



The Present Day

- *Paroikia* = *para* (next) + *oikia* (house), meaning a provisional residence. It's can be translated as sojourn, journey, or pilgrimage. *Paroikos* (parishioner) is a wayfarer.
- Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa: “The life of Christians is a life of pilgrimage and exile. Christians are ‘in’ the world, but not ‘of’ the world (cf. John 17:11,16). Their true homeland is in heaven, and they await Jesus Christ the savior to come (cf. Phil 3:20). They do not have a stable dwelling, but are on the way to their future one (cf. Heb 13:14). The whole Church is no more than a great ‘parish.’”



The Present Day

- Our task is to keep this fundamental dynamism of the mission that is the Church vibrant.
- To help our people not become static, but growing, fit for that journey.
- To go out into the highways and byways to invite everyone with us onto that journey, onto the narrow road that leads to life.
- This is a journey meant to lead them to Jesus so that they can be with him — so that he can teach, feed, heal and strengthen them — and then to be sent out by him together with us as the continuation of his mission.



The Present Day

- “Let us go to Jesus outside the gate. ... For here we have no lasting city, but we see the one that is to come. Through him, let us continually offer God a sacrifice of praise” (Heb 13:13-15).
- The Revival of the Church in the U.S. is a Eucharistic one, featuring the spiral of “Eucharistic congress” (Mass) and “Eucharistic pilgrimage” (the Christian journey of life).
- The Church herself is a Eucharistic missionary hub, called to be led always by those with missionary heads and hearts.
- That’s why God has called us as his priests, at this time, for this work!

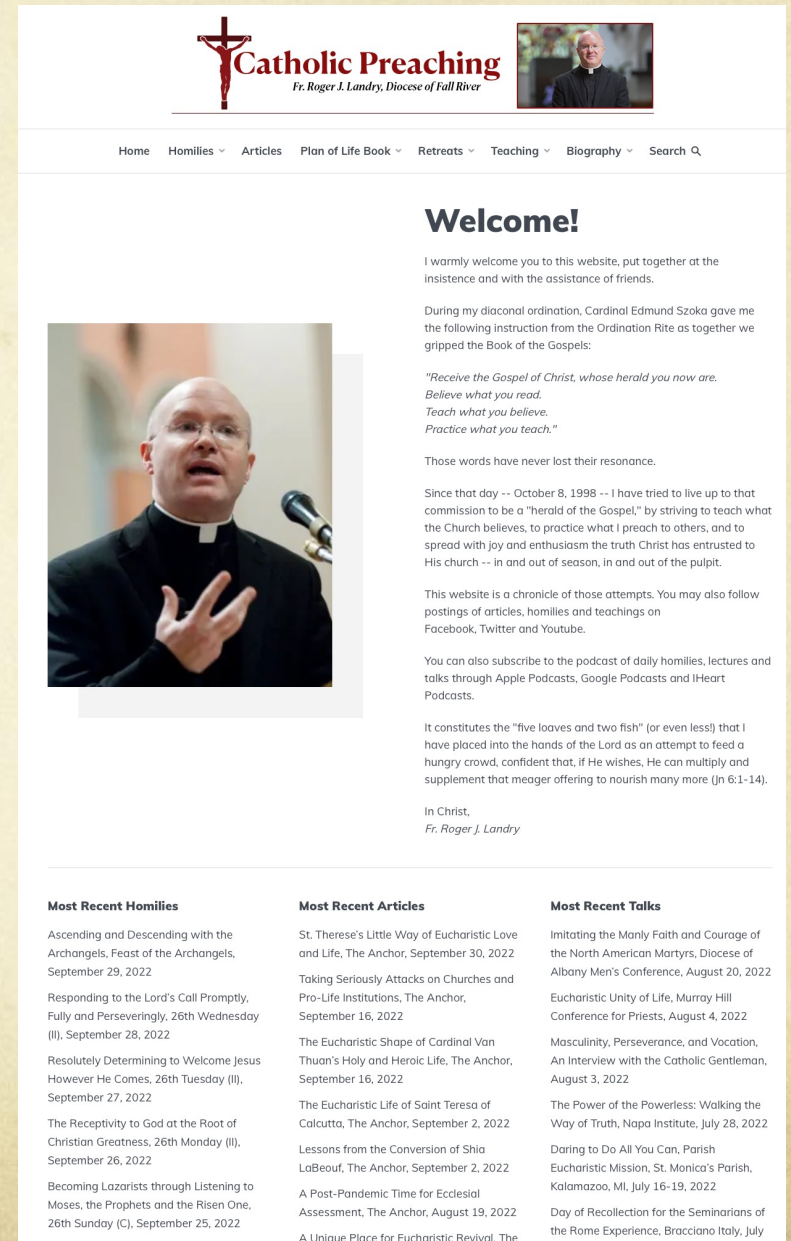
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The screenshot shows the homepage of the website "Catholic Preaching" by Fr. Roger J. Landry. The header features the website's logo, a navigation menu with links for Home, Homilies, Articles, Plan of Life Book, Retreats, Teaching, Biography, and Search, and a small portrait of Fr. Landry. The main content area is titled "Welcome!" and contains a warm welcome message, a quote from Cardinal Edmund Szoka, and a reflection on the author's role as a "herald of the Gospel." Below this is a photograph of Fr. Landry speaking at a microphone. The footer is divided into three columns: "Most Recent Homilies" with a list of recent homilies, "Most Recent Articles" with a list of recent articles, and "Most Recent Talks" with a list of recent talks.

Catholic Preaching
Fr. Roger J. Landry, Diocese of Fall River

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Welcome!

I warmly welcome you to this website, put together at the insistence and with the assistance of friends.

During my diaconal ordination, Cardinal Edmund Szoka gave me the following instruction from the Ordination Rite as together we gripped the Book of the Gospels:

"Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are. Believe what you read. Teach what you believe. Practice what you teach."

Those words have never lost their resonance.

Since that day -- October 8, 1998 -- I have tried to live up to that commission to be a "herald of the Gospel," by striving to teach what the Church believes, to practice what I preach to others, and to spread with joy and enthusiasm the truth Christ has entrusted to His church -- in and out of season, in and out of the pulpit.

This website is a chronicle of those attempts. You may also follow postings of articles, homilies and teachings on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube.

You can also subscribe to the podcast of daily homilies, lectures and talks through Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts and iHeart Podcasts.

It constitutes the "five loaves and two fish" (or even less!) that I have placed into the hands of the Lord as an attempt to feed a hungry crowd, confident that, if He wishes, He can multiply and supplement that meager offering to nourish many more (Jn 6:1-14).

In Christ,
Fr. Roger J. Landry

Most Recent Homilies

- Ascending and Descending with the Archangels, Feast of the Archangels, September 29, 2022
- Responding to the Lord's Call Promptly, Fully and Perseveringly, 26th Wednesday (II), September 28, 2022
- Resolutely Determining to Welcome Jesus However He Comes, 26th Tuesday (II), September 27, 2022
- The Receptivity to God at the Root of Christian Greatness, 26th Monday (II), September 26, 2022
- Becoming Lazarists through Listening to Moses, the Prophets and the Risen One, 26th Sunday (C), September 25, 2022

Most Recent Articles

- St. Therese's Little Way of Eucharistic Love and Life, The Anchor, September 30, 2022
- Taking Seriously Attacks on Churches and Pro-Life Institutions, The Anchor, September 16, 2022
- The Eucharistic Shape of Cardinal Van Thuan's Holy and Heroic Life, The Anchor, September 16, 2022
- The Eucharistic Life of Saint Teresa of Calcutta, The Anchor, September 2, 2022
- Lessons from the Conversion of Shila LaBeauf, The Anchor, September 2, 2022
- A Post-Pandemic Time for Ecclesial Assessment, The Anchor, August 19, 2022
- A Unique Place for Eucharistic Revival. The

Most Recent Talks

- Imitating the Manly Faith and Courage of the North American Martyrs, Diocese of Albany Men's Conference, August 20, 2022
- Eucharistic Unity of Life, Murray Hill Conference for Priests, August 4, 2022
- Masculinity, Perseverance, and Vocation, An Interview with the Catholic Gentleman, August 3, 2022
- The Power of the Powerless: Walking the Way of Truth, Napa Institute, July 28, 2022
- Daring to Do All You Can, Parish Eucharistic Mission, St. Monica's Parish, Kalamazoo, MI, July 16-19, 2022
- Day of Recollection for the Seminarians of the Rome Experience, Bracciano Italy, July

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Comments and Questions

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