



# **Giving Reason for the Hope Within Us: The Jubilee of Hope and the Missions**

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# St. John Paul II & the Primacy of *Missio ad Gentes*

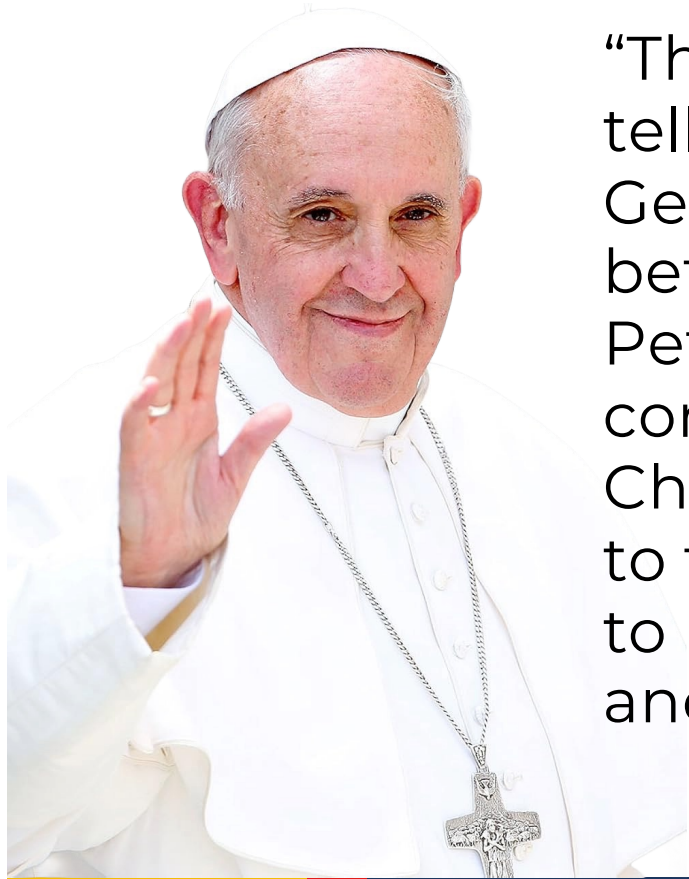


There **must be no lessening of the impetus to preach the Gospel** and to establish new churches among peoples or communities where they do not yet exist, **for this is the first task of the Church**, which has been sent forth to all peoples and to the very ends of the earth. **Without the mission *ad gentes*, the Church's very missionary dimension would be deprived of its essential meaning and of the very activity that exemplifies it** (*Redemptoris Missio* 34)





## Pope Francis and the Missions



“The next Pope,” Cardinal Bergoglio would tell his brother Cardinals in their 2013 General Congregation meetings six days before they would elect him the 266th Peter, had to be a “man who, from the contemplation and adoration of Jesus Christ, helps the Church to go out of herself to the existential peripheries, who helps her to be a fruitful mother living off the sweet and comforting joy of evangelizing.”



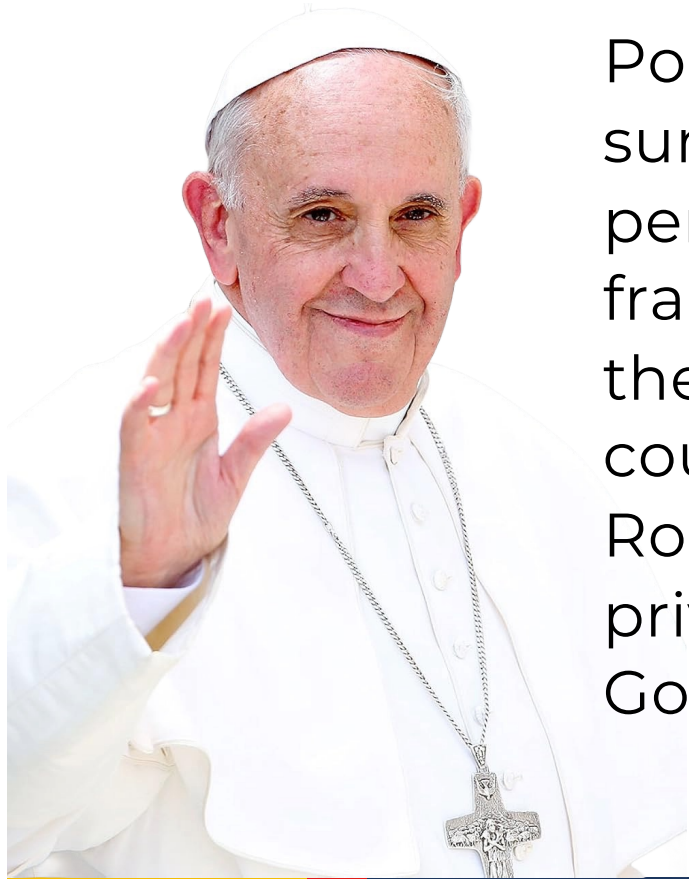
## Pope Francis and the Missions



The most important qualification for the new pope, the-then Archbishop of Buenos Aires argued, was to be a **missionary** who could **lead the whole Church on mission**, someone whose prayer would drive him joyfully to share with others the fruits of his contemplation and the ultimate love of his life.



## Pope Francis and the Missions



Pope Francis clearly took seriously that summons to bring the Gospel to the peripheries. Despite age and growing frailty, he regularly left the Vatican to bring the Gospel to the peripheries, visiting 74 countries, 44 Italian cities, and hundreds of Roman parishes, charitable works and even private homes to share the joy of the Gospel.



## Pope Francis and the Missions

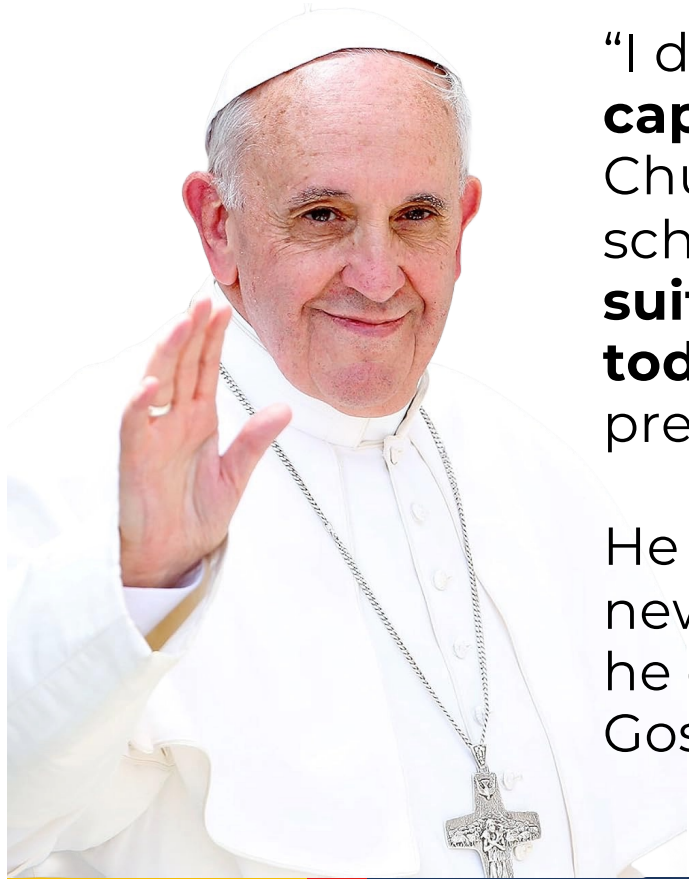


Pope Francis, however, has done more than exemplify the missionary impulse of the type of pope he thought the Church needed. He has also tried to spur the whole Church to take up the missions in his programmatic apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, published eight months after his election.





## Pope Francis and the Missions

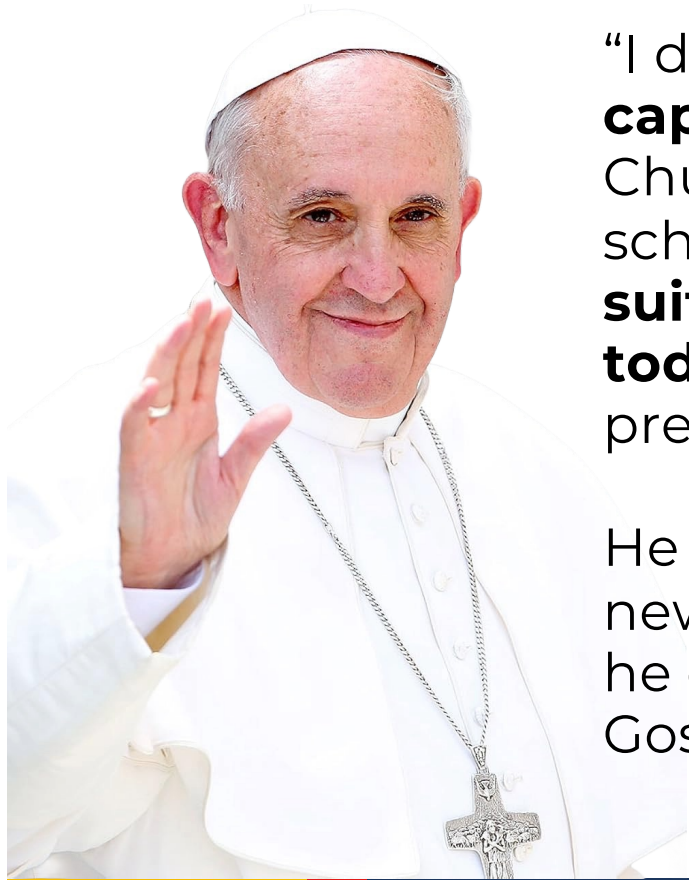


“I dream,” he wrote, “of a ...**missionary impulse capable of transforming everything**, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures, **can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world** rather than for her self-preservation” (27).

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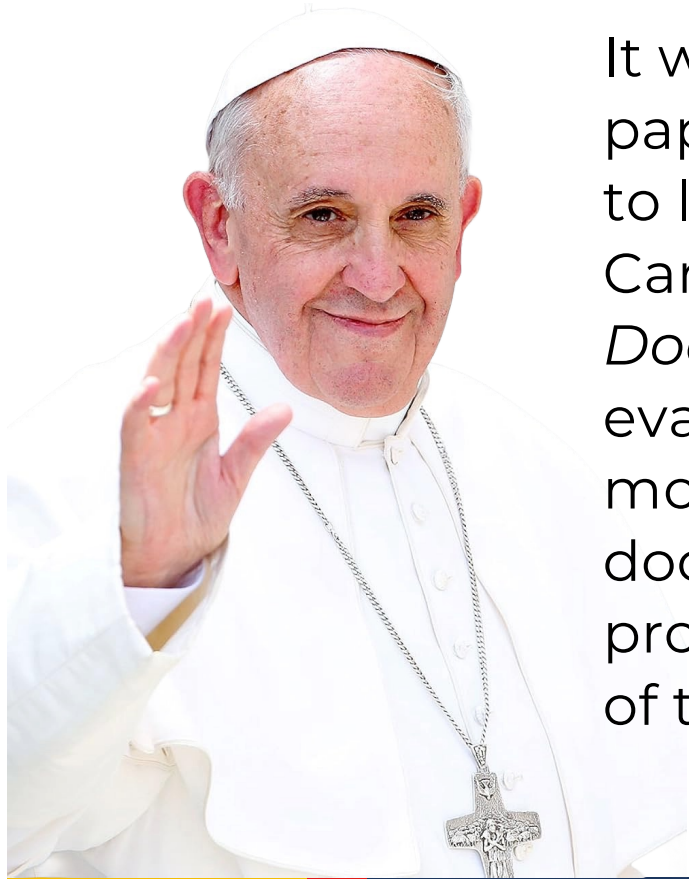
## Pope Francis and the Missions



He is convinced, as he wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium*, that **preaching the Gospel is the “first task of the Church.”** Missionary activity, he added, “still represents **the greatest challenge for the Church**” and “**must remain foremost.**” He poignantly asked, “What would happen if we were to take these words seriously? We would realize that missionary outreach is paradigmatic for all the Church’s activity” (15).



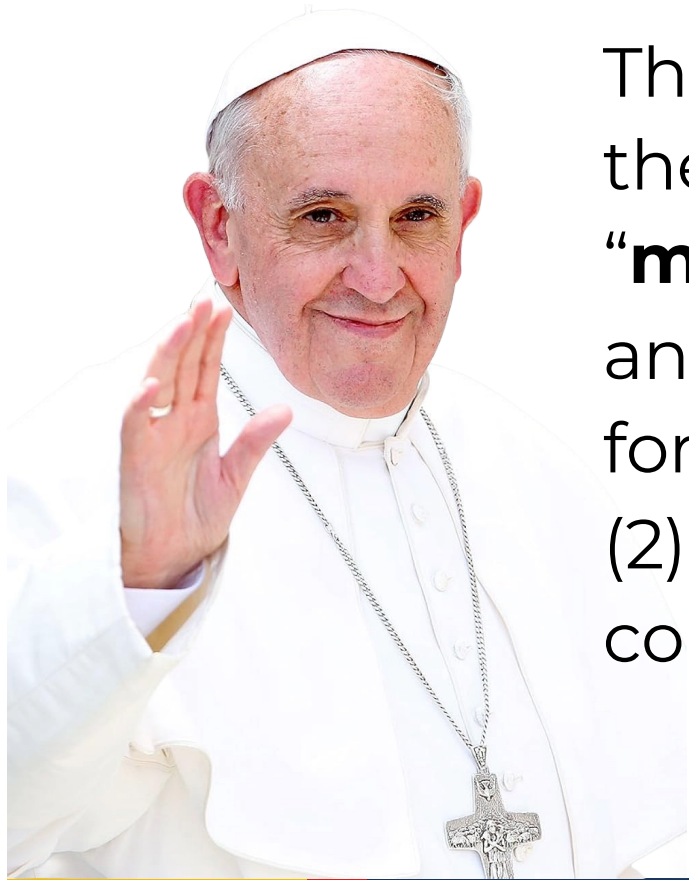
## Pope Francis and the Missions



It was not a new concern for him. Prior to the papacy, perhaps his greatest achievement was to lead the bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean in the formulation of *The Aparecida Document*, a 2007 pastoral plan for the re-evangelization of their vast territories. It's the most thorough and probably greatest document on the missions the Church has ever produced and Cardinal Bergoglio was president of the drafting committee.



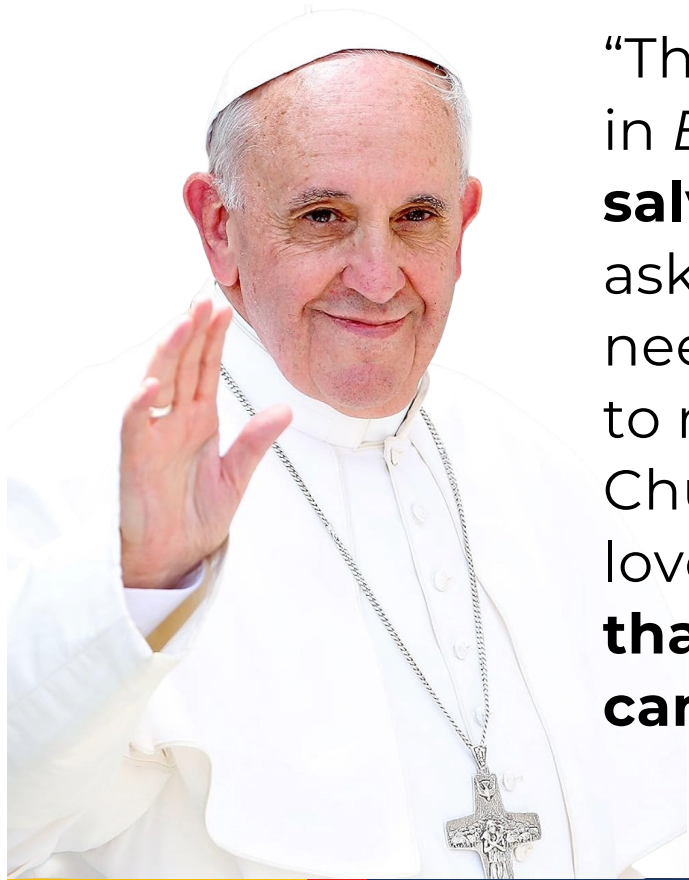
## Pope Francis and the Missions



The goal of everything the Church does, the bishops wrote, was to form **“missionary disciples in communion,”** and they described the stages in that formation: (1) encountering Jesus Christ; (2) conversion; (3) discipleship; (4) communion; and (5) mission.



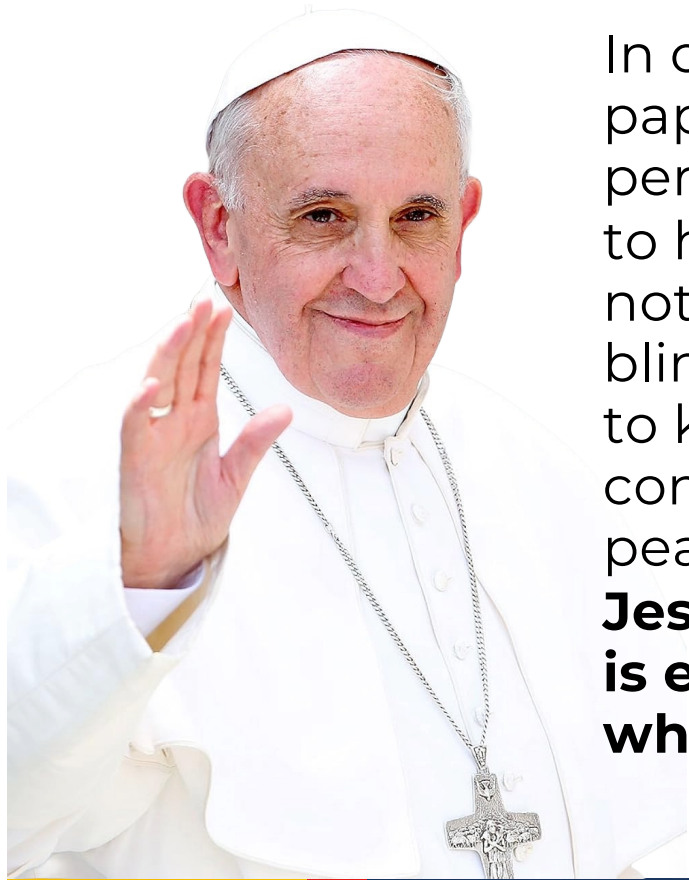
## Pope Francis and the Missions



“The primary reason for evangelizing,” he wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium*, “is the **love and salvation of Jesus** that we have received.” He asked, “**What kind of love** would not feel the need to speak of the beloved, to point him out, to make him known?” He emphasized that the Church’s missionary work is a response to that love life. “**We have a treasure of life and love that cannot deceive, and a message that cannot mislead or disappoint**” (264)



## Pope Francis and the Missions

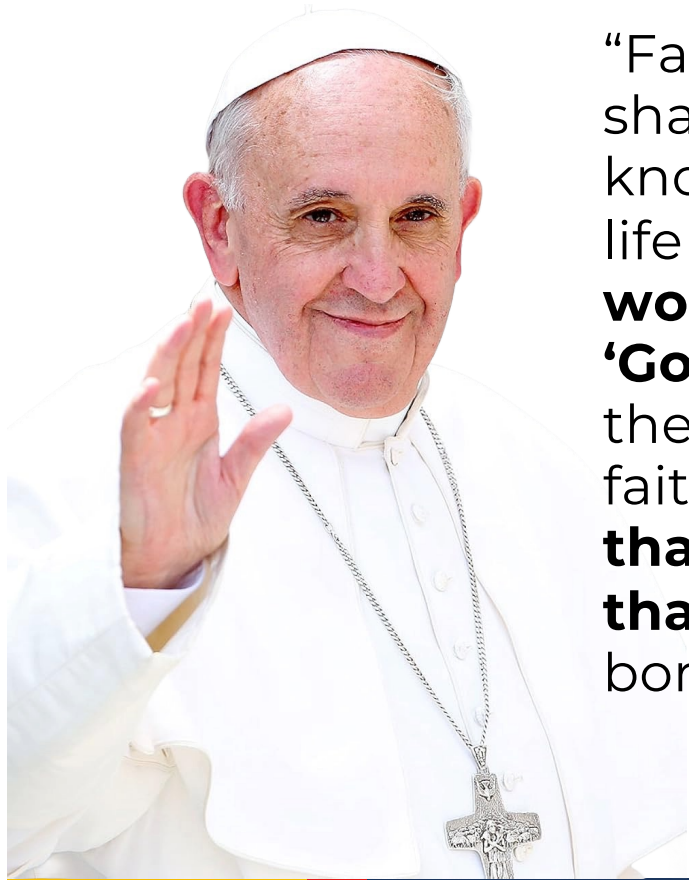


In one of the most eloquent passages of all his papal writings, he wrote: “We are convinced from personal experience that it is not the same thing to have known Jesus as not to have known him, not the same thing to walk with him as to walk blindly, not the same thing to hear his word as not to know it, and not the same thing to contemplate him, to worship him, to find our peace in him, as not to. ...**We know well that with Jesus, life becomes richer and that with him it is easier to find meaning in everything. This is why we evangelize**” (265-66).





## Pope Francis and the Missions

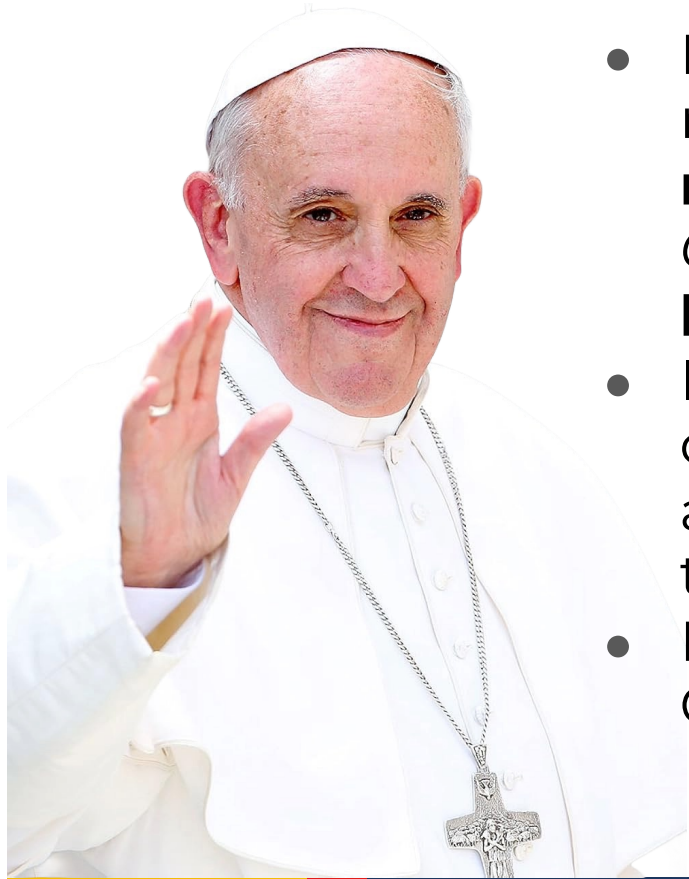


“Faith is a flame that grows stronger the more it is shared and passed on, so that everyone may know, love and confess Jesus Christ, the Lord of life and history. ... **Jesus did not say: ‘Go, if you would like to, if you have the time,’ but rather, ‘Go and make disciples of all nations.’** Sharing the experience of faith, bearing witness to the faith, proclaiming the Gospel: **this is a command that the Lord entrusts to the whole Church, and that includes you;** but it is a command that is born ... from the force of love” (WYD 2013).





## Pope Francis and the Missions



- He has underlined that none of us *has* a mission, but each of us *is* a mission: **“I am a mission on this earth,”** he wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium*. **“This is the reason why I am here.”**
- It’s clear that Pope Francis, as the successor of the Galilean fisherman whom Jesus made a “fisher of men,” has identified himself with the mission to share the faith.
- He has indeed gone from his adoration of Christ to the ends of the earth!



## Jubilee of Hope



- Jubilee of Hope, not, as expected, of Faith, for the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.
- Only 17 years after the encyclical *Spe Salvi* of Pope Benedict.
- Pope Benedict and Pope Francis both think that what the world needs most is hope.



# Jubilee of Hope



- We see the need for hope in high rates of despair, flowing from loneliness, isolation, individualism, fear and anxiety, lack of meaning, broken friendships and families, the problem of suffering and more.
- We see the consequences of a lack of hope in all those pushing, and taking advantage of, what is euphemistically dubbed Medical Assistance in Dying, Physician Assisted Suicide, and other forms of euthanasia



# Jubilee of Hope



- We see the need for hope in the drug epidemic and other addictive behaviors, whether games, porn, or social media, all of which are escapes from reality.
- We've seen it in the despair among young people that the world was imminently to cease because of climate catastrophes.
- We've seen it in collapsing birthrates.





# Jubilee of Hope



- In the US, we've seen it in the results of the CDC's biennial *Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary and Trends Report* for 2011-2021, which showed the truly alarming, and rapidly worsening, situation of the mental and spiritual health of high school students in the United States.
- 42% of U.S. high school teens in 2021 said they felt persistently sad or hopeless, 22% seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous year, 18% had come up with a concrete plan on how they would end their life, and 10% actually tried to carry out that plan.



# Jubilee of Hope



- It's worse for girls. 57% of high school girls felt persistently sad or hopeless, 30% of girls seriously contemplated suicide in the previous year, and 24% had a suicide plan.
- Since 2011, persistent sadness and hopelessness among girls had grown from 36 to 57%, suicidal thoughts from 19 to 30, and suicide plans from 15 to 24, a 60% increase in each category in a decade.







## Jubilee of Hope



The CDC looked at some factors that might be contributing causes to the crisis, but noted that, over the course of the last decade, bullying, drug use, promiscuity and sexual violence all decreased or stayed about the same. It likewise looked into students' sense of connectedness in school, their housing situation, and communication with their family, but none of these situations correlated to the swiftly growing problem.





## Jubilee of Hope



It's obvious that there is a crisis of hope underneath the persistent sadness and the consideration of ending one's life. This is linked to a crisis of meaning, of the "why" of living, of what gives motivation to be able to change own circumstances for the better, not to mention change one's environment and the world.





# Jubilee of Hope



- This crisis of hope is linked to a crisis of faith. Gen Z, those born between 1999 and 2015, are experiencing a rapid decline of faith in God.
- Since 2010, religious practice among high schoolers has dropped 27 percent.
- Thirteen percent now define as atheist, 16 percent as agnostic.



# Jubilee of Hope



- These are all reasons why we need a Jubilee of Hope.
- It's a time in which we are called to grow in hope, to rejoice in hope, and to give others, always, the reason for the hope we bear.
- It's a time for us to be men and women, master-teachers and missionaries of hope.



## What is hope?



Pope Francis, in his “Bull of Indiction” for the Jubilee, entitled *Spes Non Confundit* or “Hope does not disappoint,” wrote, “Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come.” He really doesn’t define it because, he believes, everyone has some sense of what it is already.



## What is hope?



Pope Benedict, in his 2007 encyclical called “Saved in Hope” (*Spe Salvi*) didn’t define hope either, but he gave us a clear indication of what it is based on St. Paul’s words to the Ephesians. St. Paul said that prior to the Gospel, those in Ephesus were “living without God and without hope in the world.” To be hopeless is to live without God. Therefore, he argued, **hope is really to “live with God in the world.”**





## What is hope?



- We know that, no matter what we're facing, when we confront the situation with Christ, everything changes. Everything is possible for him.
- When we see Jesus visibly at our side, smiling at us, telling us not to be afraid, your our world is totally different. That's what it means to live with hope.
- **It's to live with "Christ Jesus our Hope,"** as St. Paul defines him in his first letter to St. Timothy



## What is hope?



The Catechism does define hope as “the theological virtue by which we **desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness**, placing our **trust in Christ's promises** and **relying** not on our own strength, but **on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit**” (1817).





## What is hope?



The *Catechism* focuses our attention, first, on our trust in Christ's promises. That's why Pope Benedict, for example, links hope to faith, saying they're almost the same thing, because when we really believe in Jesus, we trust in his words and works, and therefore place our hope in him and in them





## What is hope?



Second, the Catechism focuses us on **God's help in ordinary circumstances.** We trust in the God the Holy Spirit helping us. We no longer rely on ourselves or on other human beings but on God.





## What is hope?



Third, the Catechism turns us to the kingdom of heaven and eternal life. The kingdom of heaven is not just something later, but it **means living with Christ the King here and now**, living by the virtues and values of the kingdom he describes in his Parables and other teachings. **The Kingdom of God is ultimately God**, that he's the most decisive reality of our life, one that gets us to look at everything differently. This hope leads us to desire heaven.



## What is hope?



Pope Benedict said one of the reasons why many begin to lose hope is by substituting this “**great hope**” of **eternal life** with God by lots of **lesser hopes**, short-term, and worldly. These hopes are not necessarily bad in themselves, but even if we get them, the joy we receive can be fleeting. Either way, our appetite for the great hope wanes.







# Missionaries of Hope



- Missionaries bring Christ Our Hope to the world.
- We help others to realize that God is with us in the world.
- We help them to trust in him and to rely on him.
- We inspire them to desire God, to have life with and in him, to structure life with him in its center, and to long to be with him forever.



# Missionaries of Hope



- We help people ground their life in God.
- Hope is the “sure and steadfast anchor of the soul . . . that enters . . . where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf” (Heb 6:19).
- **Hope is the anchor thrown into the clouds** that keeps the eyes of our mind and of our heart focused on God and heaven, no matter the storms of life.
- As fishers of men and key assistants to the Church’s entire fishing expedition, we need to make sure that Anchor is firm!



# Missionaries of Hope



Pope Francis: “The image of the anchor ... helps us to recognize the stability and security that is ours amid the troubled waters of this life, provided we entrust ourselves to the Lord Jesus. The storms that buffet us will never prevail, for we are firmly anchored in the hope born of grace, which enables us to live in Christ and to overcome sin, fear and death. This hope, which transcends life’s fleeting pleasures and the achievement of our immediate goals, makes us rise above our trials and difficulties, and inspires us to keep pressing forward, never losing sight of the grandeur of the heavenly goal to which we have been called.”





# Missionaries of Hope



- The missionary saints are the great witnesses of how to do this, who traveled so far from home to share our grounded hope with others.
- The history of the Church in America is filled with these great missionary saints: St. John Neumann. Bl. Francis Xavier Seelos. St. Junipero Serra. The Martyrs of Georgia. The North American Martyrs. St. Katherine Drexel. St. Rose Philippine Duchesne. Mother Theodore Guerin. St. Damien. St. Marianne Cope and St. Frances Xavier Cabrini.



# Missionaries of Hope



- To be declared a saint it must be proven that one lived the virtue of hope — like the other theological and cardinal virtues — to an heroic degree.
- St. Frances Cabrini was called by John Paul II a great “messenger of hope” and an “intrepid missionary of Christ.” Pope Francis called her a “true missionary.”
- Hope for her was summarized in her motto: “I can do all things in Him who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13).



## Missionaries of Hope



- We are all called to be heroes of hope, messengers, and missionary disciples of hope in communion with the Church.
- We, too, can do all things in him who strengthens us.





# The 1700<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Council of Nicaea



- During this Jubilee, from May to August, we have the great celebration of the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Nicaea and the Nicene Creed. Huge not just ecumenically but in itself.
- This is the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Church's response to "living without God in the world" because of the heresy of Arianism.





# The 1700<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Council of Nicaea



- We mark the Creed's focus on the Trinity, on Creation, on the Incarnation and birth of Jesus, on his Passion, Death and Resurrection, and on Holy Spirit, all sources of hope.
- We celebrate our belief in baptism, the forgiveness of sins, Jesus' resurrection and ours, and life everlasting — the great hope.
- But we also celebrate the Church's four marks, as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, which need to mark the Church's mission work.





# The Marks of the Church



- **One** — United with God and with each other, not just intentionally but sacramentally.
- **Holy** — Holy because God is holy. Christ's holiness. We are call to be holy as we are doing our work.
- **Catholic** — Universal. We're interested in bringing the Gospel to everyone to the ends of the earth.
- **Apostolic** — The Church is not just built on the foundation of the apostles but is missionary.



## The Marks of the Church: Unity



- Unity is shown in our being one organization
- Four different societies, the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, The Missionary Childhood Association, The Society of St. Peter the Apostle, the Missionary Union.
- Do we have all four?



## The Marks of the Church: Unity



- Unity is also shown in the fact that, just like the Church, we are one organization with different national offices, and different diocesan offices.
- Do we work knowing we are all on the same team? For God and for the missions? Or do we try to do our own thing (even if do try something otherwise laudable)?



## The Marks of the Church: Unity



- Do we do what we've promised to do for the pope's missions, or do we substitute and prioritize other things?
- Sometimes there's hyper-territoriality, especially around things like fundraising, such as "distrust" for the national office, concerned about "stealing" donors. This is not a Catholic attitude, but focused too much on Cephas, Paul or Apollos. Are we focused in a united way on working — and raising money — for the *missions*?



## The Marks of the Church: Holiness



- We're called to be like God and do our job like the saints would.
- What would it be like if St. Teresa of Calcutta were doing our job, if Francis Xavier, if Fulton Sheen?
- Are we accountable to God, to the Church and to the missions?
- How much do we personally pray and sacrifice for the missions?



## The Marks of the Church: Holiness



- Corruption is contrary to holiness. The biggest corruption is when we become an ecclesiastical bureaucrat rather than a missionary for the missions.
- There's been corruption at the national office that has been the subject even of papal comments.
- We also have corruption in some diocesan offices, where donor intent is not honored. People who sacrifice for the Missions rightfully expect their money to go to the missions. It needs to be named and fought.



## The Marks of the Church: Catholic



- We are called to exemplify the universality of the Church, that we have brothers and sisters across the globe.
- We have to have a heart for missionaries and for those they're serving.
- We want to help Catholics become truly Catholic, in their prayer, sacrifices, and generosity. This means not just “twinning” parishes or dioceses but caring for the universality of the Pope’s missions.





## The Marks of the Church: Apostolic



- Apostolic first means grounded on the pope and the apostles. That's why there's a primacy of the pope's missions.
- But it also means missionary, that we know we are continuing the mission of the 12, the 72 and the 500.
- Are we zealous to make new disciples?



# The Missionary Nature of the Church



- The Church is the Bride and the Body of Christ our Hope.
- We are called to “be always ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.”
- This is the essence of the Church’s whole mission, as Pope Francis has powerfully reminded us.
- This is why TPMS exists.



Thank **you!**