**Faith**

***FOUNDATIONAL TO SERVICE***

*Builds a firm foundation oriented to a common vision centered on Faith (Truth), impelled by Hope, leading to Love (Service).*

1. **“Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.” Hebrews 11: 1**
2. “Faith is an answer by which we receive him as the permanent foundation of our life.” *Benedict XVI, 10/31/12*
3. “If then faith be the essence of a Christian life….then it follows that our duty lies in risking upon Christ’s word what we have…..trusting in Him to enable us to fulfil our vows.” John Henry Newman, “The Ventures of Faith”
4. We cannot serve without the knowledge (Truth) which comes from faith.
5. Faith, then, is tied to truth, not emotion which is fickle.
6. Faith then leads us into true service (diakonia).
7. Hope without faith is impossible
8. A man without faith is hopeless, for faith builds a vision of what is to be and is. It embraces the vision of the present and the future.
9. Faith builds hope. It apprehends the future and the present, and discovers its object, love. It sees reality in a way unlike those without faith and hope.
10. Love without faith is secular social work, not service.
11. Faith brings to awareness love (divinity)
12. Faith penetrates time and space **(Fr. Galot story)**
13. Faith penetrates time for it expresses a certain “fullness without end” (We are immersed in divine communion and the Communion of the Saints.) **Kairos time.**
14. Letter to Diognetus (2nd C. AD)  
     “*Christians live in cities inhabited by Greeks and barbarians…. They adapt to the local customs in food, clothing, and any other way of life… Any foreign land becomes their homeland, yet every homeland remains a foreign land. They dwell on earth, but are citizens of heaven.”*
15. Faith penetrates space for it permeates a broad horizon and is not limited to an individual’s circumstances; it takes individual “possessions” and places them at service of the common good (see Acts). It provides continuity across the centuries. (We are immersed in history and oriented to the future.) **Chronos time.**
16. Time is greater than space; Kairos greater than Chronos, i.e., ***eternity is already a part of chronos time***.
17. Because faith penetrates Kairos time, we can faithfully endure with conviction and tenacity, without anxiety, Chronos time.
18. We are able to resist the **four temptations** related to time.
19. Anxiety in activity
20. Depression or Competitive greed/power
21. Apathy (nothing changes; cyclical)
22. Denial (Kairos doesn’t exist. Eternity denied. Idolatry of the self.)
23. Faith is the beginning, the foundation; love is the purpose, the “end;” service is the action, the service of faith in human life. Thus, the virtue of love serves God present in the human condition.
24. All the other virtues that bring man (and society) to perfection follow from faith impelled by hope (vision of the Good that is and is to be) into loving service of God’s presence. It is true worship!
25. Diaconal service then is love grounded in truth and an expression of Faith. It is impelled by hope. It is incarnated love (service). It is worship.

**COMMUNAL**

*Builds a place of community; oriented to community development*

1. Faith makes us enter into the vision of Jesus which opens us to love for God and love for others.
2. Faith is not the achievement of isolated individuals; rather it is received by entering into ecclesial communion which transmits faith.
3. Authentic faith is never completely personal (EG 183).
4. Faith is truly personal only if it is also communal (Benedict XVI, 10/31/12
5. Faith is not the product of my thought, rather, it is the fruit of relationship and communication with Jesus drawing me into communion with the Trinity and with the Church (Benedict XVI, 10/31/12)
6. Faith does not bring autonomy and self-definition; rather it embeds one in relationship with others and with God.
7. Faith is given to me by God through a community of believers that is the Church and projects me into a communion with others.
8. Intrapersonal development (Life into the Trinity, Life with the Communion of the Saints)
9. We must come, through faith, to know and love the Good.
10. We cannot build what we have not known and loved.
11. We are to pray, have relationship with God, so as to know him and his will, his vision, his presence, his promises and to make that act of faith which is required of us.
12. Trinitarian unity into which we are drawn up as sons and daughters of the Father.
13. This is our ***theosis*** our sanctification.
14. The core of all being is divine communion (Trinitarian life).
15. This is our diakonia and our consecration to Jesus and the servant mysteries of the Church.
16. We are also drawn into communion with the Saints in heaven, and draw near the heavenly Jerusalem, our eternal home.
17. Interpersonal reliability (Life in the Church and World)
18. Communion with the Father in the power of the Spirit impels us to service to the common good
19. Demands of us a unitive love with others; see # 4,5 below
20. The core of social being is community (Church)
21. This is our ***kenosis***.
22. This is our diakonia and our consecration to the human condition.
23. It is in the ecclesial community that personal faith matures and grows.
24. Faith builds community and community transmits faith. The faith community has two dimensions:
25. Dimension of history/remembrance (Space)
26. Dimension of transcendence, i.e., movement toward God and fulfillment (Time)

**FOCAL**

*Faith marks God’s presence and focuses our choices*

1. Faith is linked then to Love (God’s presence)

--Intrapersonal presence and interior growth

--Interpersonal presence and Interpersonal reliability (Service to the common good and unitive love)

1. Focuses on divine presence, i.e., faith discriminates the spirits i.e., the divine from the evil.
2. Faith disciplines the senses; it is focused on the good
3. Faith is a “spiritual sense” informing the intellect; it can be direct insertion into the intellect, will, and/or the passions, but usually it comes through the senses of created man’s faculties.
4. **Mind**: *Intellect* and *Will*; *Body*: *Sense* and *Passions*

Faith is a divine sense, a divine gift that informs the Intellect and disciplines the will to choose that which is good, He who is the Good. That divine sense can miraculously penetrate the intellect, or be inserted into the Intellect through the sense by lived ecclesial experience of the individual.

1. Faith, then, focuses the intellect on that which is truly good and directs our choices with a passionate desire. This is the experience of the saint.

**UNITIVE**

*Unity is superior to conflict*

1. Only love will unite us, nothing else.
2. Genuine love requires Faith (truth).
3. Shared Faith enables love to endure.
4. Utility alone cannot unite us long.
5. Faith identifies the presence of love.
6. Love is united with Faith
7. Faith united to love sustains the human family.

*“Loving others is a spiritual force the draws us into union with God” – Pope Francis*

1. Faithlessness is darkness, but faithlessness cannot extinguish love (Who is God).
2. Without faith, the human city will be united only by sin, because sin is darkness and faith is light. The unity of sin is deceptive, for it results in fragmentation, divisiveness, entropy, just as the “unity” of darkness seems seamless and obscure yet a false unity a dark unity.
3. To “break faith” is the choice to be in conflict.
4. Faithlessness is a choice for disunity. Do we consider this when we have that choice, e.g., do I believe my bishop, the Magisterium, or do I not?
5. The unity of the Church through time and space is linked to the unity of faith (the unity of truth). (LF 47)
6. We have a choice for or against unity, for or against faith. It is a grave matter, for if faith is not one, then it is not faith!
7. The Unity of Faith (see LF 47)

1) One God – One Faith in one God, known/confessed

2) One Lord- One Faith focused on one Lord Jesus:

Gnostics were wrong. There is no greater or lesser faith.

1. One Church – One Faith shared by one Church
2. Because of Faith’s unity, it maintains its purity and integrity
3. Because Faith is interconnected, to deny what seems insignificant is to distort the whole.
4. Harming faith is to harm the communion/community.
5. The whole is greater than the part
6. Do we consider this when we are tempted to enter into intractable conflict by splitting hairs?
7. Do not deny what is significant by quarreling over difference.
8. This does not reduce the significance of the part; rather it places it in the context of the whole.
9. De Deo Uno and De Deo Trino
10. God is one, yet God is three. You cannot deny one of the three Persons without denying the One God. This is the great Christian revelation of God.
11. Unity exists in the presence of three.
12. Our faith, then, though having many expressions, is one Faith that makes us one people under one God

**SERVILE**

*Faith is placed in the service of justice (right order)*

*Faith is the basis of our concern for the development of the poor (EG 186)*

1. Justice as Appreciation of architecture of human relationships
2. Justice as the “common good”
3. Faith offers forgiveness
4. Faith teaches us just forms of government
5. Faith is never just for ourselves as individuals. It is service to others.
6. We receive nothing from God to keep to ourselves alone.
7. To serve is a condition of our salvation. To place faith into service is obligatory.
8. “The more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others.” Paul VI *Octogesima Adveniens 23*
9. The Church “cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice.” Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est 28
10. Faith involves a deep desire to change the world and leave the world a better place – Francis EG 183
11. Service of liberation of the poor to take their place in society EG 187
12. Service through solidarity (a new mindset oriented to community and life rather than property and goods.)
13. Faith places us at the service of the poor

*“Jesus wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others. He wants us to stop looking for personal riches which shelter us from the reality of other people’s lives.” – Pope Francis*

1. Faith impoverishes the rich (kenosis) and enriches the poor (theosis)
2. Faith which allows poverty to evangelize us for in poverty one finds Jesus Christ. EG 198
3. The poor have an openness to faith EG 199
4. See the Apostles’ admonition to St. Paul (Gal. 2: 10), i.e., do not forget the poor. ***“But from those who were reputed to be important (what they once were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those of repute made me add nothing. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter to the circumcised,*** ***for the one who worked in Peter for an apostolate to the circumcised worked also in me for the Gentiles,*** ***and when they recognized the grace bestowed upon me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas their right hands in partnership, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.*** ***Only, we were to be mindful of the poor, which is the very thing I was eager to do.”***
5. Do not succumb to self-centeredness which is a form of paganism and thus faithlessness.
6. Faith directs our attention to the poor and vulnerable, because faith directs our attention to the dignity of human life (see next section), which leads to the unalterable conclusion: ***Dignity of the human person and the common good rank higher than comfort of the privileged.***

***Archbishop Oscar Romero***

1. His homilies
2. You should know that you have not suffered alone, for you are the church; you are the People of God; you are Jesus, in the here and now. He is crucified in you, just as surely as He was crucified 2000 years ago on that hill outside of Jerusalem. And you should know that your pain and your suffering, like His, will contribute to El Salvador’s liberation and redemption.
3. ― Oscar A. Romero, *The Violence of Love* “The church must suffer for speaking the truth, for pointing out sin, for uprooting sin. No one wants to have a sore spot touched, and therefore a society with so many sores twitches when someone has the courage to touch it and say: “You have to treat that. You have to get rid of that. Believe in Christ. Be converted.”
4. “For the church, the many abuses of human life, liberty, and dignity are a heartfelt suffering. The church, entrusted with the earth’s glory, believes that in each person is the Creator’s image and that everyone who tramples it offends God. As holy defender of God’s rights and of his images, the church must cry out. It takes as spittle in its face, as lashes on its back, as the cross in its passion, all that human beings suffer, even though they be unbelievers. They suffer as God’s images. There is no dichotomy between man and God’s image. Whoever tortures a human being, whoever abuses a human being, whoever outrages a human being abuses God’s image, and the church takes as its own that cross, that martyrdom.”
5. His life and his death
6. His conversion from the comfort of the privileged to the dignity of the human person.

**CREATIVE and FECUND**

*Family life and ministry to family*

1. Example: Sarah and Abraham by faith conceived.
2. **“By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place he was to receive as an inheritance.”** Hebrews 11: 8
3. **“By faith he received power to generate, even though he was past the normal age – and Sarah herself was sterile – for he thought that the one who had made the promise was trustworthy. So it was that there came forth from one man, himself as good as dead, descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sands on the seashore.”** Hebrews 11: 11-12
4. Example: Joseph by faith accepted Mary and Jesus
5. To see a blessing in every human being (high value of procreation)
6. Dignity of the human person (Joseph treated Mary with dignity. Did not divorce or shame her.)

1. Social equality cannot exist without reference to a common Father

2. Social equality cannot exist without common values (faith)

3. If faith is relative, purely subjective, then equality cannot exist

4. All are subject to a common faith which dignifies

E. Shame is replaced by acceptance of divine love.

1. Reference: **Adam and Eve**

2. Reference: **The Prodigal Son**

F. Reflect: Where is your shame?

G. What binds you into a sterile self-awareness?

H. What have you experienced in life that keeps you from moving out of shame/brokenness toward creativity and fertility in bearing God’s Word?

1. To be fruitful/fertile/creative as proclaimers of the Gospel, we cannot be bound by shame (either who we are or what we proclaim)

2. Shame is used by Satan to subvert the Divine plane (see Genesis account of Eden)

3. The creativity and fecundity of forgiveness and reconciliation

a. New life

b. New love

c. New opportunity

d. New grace

e. New relationship

f. New freedom

4. Things conducive to healthy and holy family life:

a. Faith

b. Refusal to shame

c. Forgiveness

d. Fertility

(All these things bring about equality and a respect for the human person. All these things are acknowledgement of the Divine will and presence.)

**ILLUMINATIVE/REVELATORY**

*Illuminates social relationships*

***Cf. John 12:46***

**Whoever sees me sees the one who sent me.** **I came into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in darkness.**

**Cf. John 11:40**

**Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?”**

**Cf. Psalm 18**

**You, Lord, are the light for my lamp. My God, you bring light to my darkness. With you I confront the armies of darkness; with my God I can leap over the walls.**

**St. Irenaus, *Against Heresies***

**To follow the Savior, in fact, is to participate in salvation, just as to follow the light means to be infused with brightness. He who is in the light is certainly not he who illuminates the light and makes it luminous. He rather gives nothing to the light, but it is by the light that he receives the benefit of its splendor and all the other advantages.**

1. **“By Faith, we understand that the universe was ordered by the word of God so that what is visible came into being through the invisible.”** Hebrews 11: 3
2. Faith, because it is born of God’s covenantal love, is knowledge which illuminates history. It penetrates time and space (see above).
3. Faith reveals the ***“Grammar of God”*** i.e., how God speaks to men and how He reveals himself in creation.
4. [Faith] illumines the material world, trusts its inherent order and knows that it calls us to an ever widening path of harmony and understanding. The gaze of science thus benefits from faith: faith encourages the scientist to remain constantly open to reality in all its inexhaustible richness. Faith awakens the critical sense by preventing research from being satisfied with its own formulae and helps it to realize that nature is always greater. By stimulating wonder before the profound mystery of creation, faith broadens the horizons of reason to shed greater light on the world which discloses itself to scientific investigation. [[*Lumen Fidei*](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei_en.html)*, Section 34]*
5. Faith, on the other hand, by revealing the love of God the Creator, enables us to respect nature all the more, and to discern in it a grammar written by the hand of God and a dwelling place entrusted to our protection and care. Faith also helps us to devise models of development which are based not simply on utility and profit, but consider creation as a gift for which we are all indebted; it teaches us to create just forms of government, in the realization that authority comes from God and is meant for the service of the common good. Faith likewise offers the possibility of forgiveness, which so often demands time and effort, patience and commitment. Forgiveness is possible once we discover that goodness is always prior to and more powerful than evil, and that the word with which God affirms our life is deeper than our every denial. From a purely anthropological standpoint, unity is superior to conflict; rather than avoiding conflict, we need to confront it in an effort to resolve and move beyond it, to make it a link in a chain, as part of a progress towards unity. [Sections 54, 55]
6. Faith reveals love in service to justice (common good)
7. Faith renders justice in the face of evil so as to advance unity
8. Faith reveals God in our midst and His desire for solidarity and unity
9. There is an urgent need, then, to see once again that faith is a light, for once the flame of faith dies out, all other lights begin to dim. The light of faith is unique, since it is capable of illuminating every aspect of human existence. A light this powerful cannot come from ourselves but from a more primordial source: in a word, it must come from God. Faith is born of an encounter with the living God who calls us and reveals his love, a love which precedes us and upon which we can lean for security and for building our lives.
10. Transformed by this love, we gain fresh vision, new eyes to see; we realize that it contains a great promise of fulfilment, and that a vision of the future opens up before us. Faith, received from God as a supernatural gift, becomes a light for our way, guiding our journey through time. [Section 4]
11. Faith helps form models of human development based on the common good, not utility or profit
12. Without faith, mutual trust would be weakened and stability threatened
13. Faith is a creative light
14. Faith discerns vocation, the voice of the Father (c.f. the call of Eli)
15. Faith is a form of gazing (cf. Resurrection accounts); Seeing is a form of following;
16. Faith in centered on gazing upon Christ because faith discloses to us a truth arising from a Christic encounter.

**PASSIONATE**

*Faith leads one to the Cross (Suffering/Martyrdom)*

*The Deacon’s call to a Spiritual Martyrdom*

1. **“By faith, Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer his only son, of whom it is said, ‘Through Isaac descendants shall bear your name.’ He reasoned that God was able to raise even from the dead, and he received Isaac back as a symbol.”** Hebrews 11: 17-19
2. Shared faith enables us to endure/suffer
3. See the martyrdom of St. Stephen in Acts
4. See the Passion of Jesus
5. See Mary’s suffering (Marian homily inserted here)
6. It was Mary who bore the most humble but bold witness to her Son. It was Mary who bore the Word of God in her heart and then conceived Word in her womb.

Only because of her faith in that Word that came to her, a Word she nurtured in her Immaculate Heart, was she then able to conceive and bear the Son of God, her creator and Savior, Jesus.

Mary kept close to her heart the Word made Flesh. She said, “Yes.” She said, “Fiat.” She said, “Let it be done to me.” St. Augustine would later write that Mary was more blessed for hearing God’s word and keeping custody of it in her heart than because of the flesh she gave to her divine Son. Since this was true, Mary was able to stand by her Son as he died on the cross, stand by Him without staining her Immaculate Heart. She knew it was by virtue of her faith in God’s Word that she had been able to conceive that Word in her womb, and it was by faith in that Word that she was able to give bold witness to her Son when he gave up his life on the Cross.

Mary, who surpasses all of us in her sanctity and her fidelity, remains like us, a member of the Church, and a member of the Body of Christ her Son, a witness to her Son’s death and resurrection.

You too are members of the Body of Christ. You also carry God’s Word in your hearts for you are heralds of that Word.

My brothers, you will be more blessed and find greater dignity in the Word you nourish in your hearts and profess with your lips than in any office you may bear in the future. You are first, and most importantly, members of the Body of Christ, *from which you must never separate yourselves*.

You cannot become the Image of Jesus the Servant, Jesus the Deacon, unless you first have welcomed the Word in your hearts, treasured it, nurtured it, obeyed it, followed it, trusted it. Mary would not have become the Mother of God had she not first accepted and kept the Word of God in her Immaculate Heart. You cannot become the Icon of Jesus the Servant if you do not first hold in purity of heart the Word entrusted to you. Mary could not have endured the passion and death of her Son without cradling in her heart the Word that had come to her. You will not be able to endure the trials and difficulties of ministry without first knowing and nurturing and loving the Word entrusted to you.

Yes, diaconal ministry can be modeled after Mary. A deacon is to give humble yet bold witness to the Gospel. His is a vocation of humble service, not arrogant rule, but also a vocation of boldly proclaiming the Gospel. There is no place for the timid there. A deacon must teach and preach boldly, with conviction and faith arising from a pure conscience.

1. The cross as a moment of faith and growth

***“We proclaim Christ crucified; a stumbling block and foolishness to some, but to those who are called, the wisdom of God!”***

My friends, I want you to look at that cross, that crucifix before you behind the altar. Look and don’t take your eyes off it as I speak.

What do you see? What is it that moves as you gaze upon it? What is there that in any way challenges your faith? Is there anything or anyone there you love, or admire, or in which you believe?

Do you see him? Do you see in that crucifix the destruction of a temple, or the destruction of sin? Do you see salvation won for you, or do you see condemnation? Do you see something to be pitied, or someone to be loved? Do you see it as an opportunity to mock the God who promises so much and yet seems so far from us all too often, or do you see the wisdom and glory of God revealed in human flesh?

***“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life.”*** (John 3: 16)

We cannot endure the crosses in our lives if we have not first embraced, received, accepted and nurtured the Word of God given to us, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord! We must hear and accept God’s Word, Jesus, in our lives, hold him, protect him, guard him, love him, cultivate that Word, and welcome him if we are to embrace the cross this Lent.

There on that cross you will see God’s total commitment to us his people, his total commitment to humanity. There you will see our opportunity to accept God’s call to be converted, redeemed, sanctified, loved, embraced, lifted up in glory, healed, protected from evil, empowered, refreshed and renewed.

Jesus took upon himself the guilt of us all and in so doing, he crushed Satan and sin and ultimately death itself. From the depths of his suffering he will lift us up now into a glory that we can scarcely imagine

Meditate on the cross, for there you will find the love of God outpoured for you. There you will find the reason why the saints all have said we will see the face of Jesus in the poor and the suffering. Pope Francis himself has said, and I quote,

***“Jesus wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others. He wants us to stop looking for personal riches which shelter us from the reality of other people’s lives.”***

1. The moment of love
2. The moment of self-effacement and the proclamation of Jesus
3. The moment of forgiveness
4. Suffering does not dispel darkness; rather it lights for us the way out of the darkness
5. A reminder that our faithful service is hopeful
6. Propels us forward, to the future even in the midst of darkness, absence of fidelity in the world, sin.
7. Faith is costly. Are we willing to pay the cost?
8. The great temptations:

1) Avoid the cost, i.e., martyrdom.

2) Be silent.

3) Compromise the Faith.

h. *What have we ventured for the Faith?* Cf. John Henry Newman

**PREDICATORY:**

*Linked to preaching; thus, all preaching is hope-filled and faithful to the One who is Love*.

**2 Cor. 13-14** Since, then, we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, “I believed, therefore I spoke,” we too believe and therefore speak, knowing that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and place us with you in his presence**.**

1. Faith seeks expression (oral and action)
2. Faith is oriented to the Word as our Protestant brothers remind us.
3. The Word of God evokes faith (Faith comes from hearing)
4. Faith speaks God’s Word
5. The preacher is to express that which has been given and accepted, a Word that cannot remain unexpressed. (cf. Jeremiah’s plight)
6. The one who preaches without faith is a heretic.
7. The one who preaches without hope is an empty gong or a clanging cymbal.
8. The one who preaches without love is the devil.
9. We therefore MUST preach as persons deeply in love with Jesus whom we have known in faith and live in hope to serve.
10. The proclamation of the Gospel is the prime form of charity – JPII *Novo Millenio Ineunte 50*

John 1: 35-46 “The Calling of the first disciples”

**How would you react to a TV ad that would go like this?**

*Support John Paul II Ministries! March out in the power of the Spirit to claim victory over the powers of hell. Anointed! Dynamic! Making an impact on this generation for Jesus Christ!*

**How would you react to this ad?**

*Allow God to invite you to enter more deeply the path of contemplation. Experience sanctity as a fruit of dialogue with the Holy Spirit. Practice the presence of God, and open yourself to the gentle prompting of the Spirit by saying as Mary did, “I am the handmaid of Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word.”*

Would you agree that evangelization consists of both?

Definition of Evangelization

Evangelization is the missionary commitment of all believers to proclaim the person of Jesus Christ to the world. Pope Francis says in Evangelii Gaudium (19): “Evangelization is obedience to the missionary mandate from Jesus himself to go and make disciples of all nations.” Pope Francis also says in Evangelii Gaudium (25) that we must be in a permanent state of mission and evangelization.

**Qualities of Evangelization**

I submit to you that evangelization consists in *zealous,* *faith filled*, *bold* and *joyful* *preaching* as seen in the preaching of the Apostles, the early deacons of the Church, and of our Blessed Mother. It is the task of the Church to proclaim “the joyful, patient, and progressive preaching of the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (EG 110-111). I suggest to you that deacons, priests and bishops, along with our catechists and institutions need to adopt today a bold, *apologetic* (i.e., reason at the service of faith) approach in presenting the Gospel and seek ways to publically affirming the faith, *fearlessly, joyfully* and with a *clear* sense of pastoral urgency.

I also submit to you that without the inner conviction and conversion of the evangelizer, all efforts to evangelize others are simple self-promotion rather than the presentation of the person of Jesus to the world. Cf: **1Thes 1: 1-10** Pope Francis is continually reminding us that we cannot fall into a defensive posture of self-concern and self-promotion. He who evangelizes must be concerned for the other person, concerned for reaching out to those on the periphery, in presenting Jesus to those in need. He said, “Spirit-filled evangelizers are evangelizers who pray and work.” He went on to say that “Without prolonged moments of adoration, of prayerful encounter with the word, of sincere conversation with the Lord, our work easily becomes meaningless.” (EG 262) He went on to say “…this conviction has to be sustained by our own constantly renewed experience of savoring Christ’s friendship and his message. It is impossible to persevere in a fervent evangelization unless we are convinced from personal experience …. (The evangelizer must know that Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him…. A person who is not convinced, enthusiastic, certain and in love, will not convince anybody.” (EG266) The Holy Father often talks of the need of the evangelizer to be close to the people. “We want to enter fully into the fabric of society, sharing the lives of all, listening to their concerns, helping them materially and spiritually in their needs.” (EG 269)

**Evangelization: Jesus**

For Jesus, the purpose of evangelization is drawing people into his intimate relationship with the Father and the Spirit. i.e., drawing all humankind up into the life of the Trinity. When we intone the penitential rite at Mass, we declare, don’t we, “You came to gather the nations into the peace of God’s Kingdom, Lord have mercy!” Jesus’ methods of evangelization can be seen in the manner in which he treated people. He welcomed everyone, without distinction, first the poor then the rich, outsiders, the righteous, the prostitutes and other public sinners. He demonstrated the manner in which the Church today is to evangelize, i.e., by believing in Love and in the person who is love, Jesus Christ. He demonstrated over and over again that evangelization and the call to holiness are bound together.

Two actions are attached to Jesus’ work of evangelization: Healing and forgiving. Multiple miracles attest to this. For Jesus, healing entails not only physical renewal but more importantly, salvation of the spirit, inner conversion and liberation from sin. **Cf: Mark 1: 29-45; Mark 5: 21-43; Mark 7: 24-37**

**Second Vatican Council**

**Evangelization is rooted in the Universal Call to Holiness**

Vatican II taught that there is a **universal call to** **holiness** which is closely linked to the **universal call to mission**. Every member of the faithful is called to holiness and to mission. Every institution of the Church is called to conversion. This, then, is not just the responsibility of the clergy. All the baptized are called to a life of inner conversion, to a deeper knowledge of Jesus the Christ, the one savior of the world; all are called to holiness, in other words **and** all are called to evangelize, to proclaim Jesus to the world in which we live. This dual calling remains until Jesus’ coming at the end of time. Evangelization, the Council taught (LG 12) is ***the energy which permits the Church to respond to her primary goal, that of the call to* *holiness.*** Each person and indeed the entire Church is called to this conversion, this call to mission.

Yes, the call to holiness is inherently tied to the call to mission, to evangelization. It is the love and knowledge of Christ that fills our hearts that impels us to evangelize. It is openness to his Word and the deepening our faith through the hearing of the Gospel that sends us out to evangelize. In this way, we help others rediscover ***the joy in believing***. Pope Francis wrote: “An evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral.” (EG 10) The Old Testament predicted that the joy of salvation would abound in messianic times. The Gospel continually invites us to rejoice.

**Evangelization is both *practical* and *spiritual.***

Evangelization is **very active** in its practice but rooted in contemplation, in resting with God, in **nurturing the Word in the heart**. It is then both **humble and docile** and **bold and persuasive**. It is both **interior** for it pertains to conversion of the heart and it is **exterior** for it is oriented to the world. It is both **receptive to the Word proclaimed** and it is **revealing of that Word.** It arises from a deep knowledge, a deep personal experience of the Lord Jesus and it extends that knowledge, that experience to the world. *"An essential characteristic "of this missionary spirituality, Bl. John Paul II tells us, “is intimate communion with Christ."*

In practice, evangelization emphasizes action over theory, service to humanity over religious discussion, speaking the truth over social graces. It takes the Gospel which has been received and runs with it, without doubting or making excuses for it. It evokes a sense of courage and self-possession. It is not arrogant or opinionated, yet it is certain and bold. It takes one on a journey and on the way, and only on the way, do we pause to reflect. ***Reflection follows action which is preceded by experiencing Jesus in hearing the Gospel***. Please don’t misunderstand what I just said. I am not saying that reflection is less important than action. I am not saying that prayer takes second place to service. What I am saying is **you have to experience something and act upon it** **before you have something to reflect upon. Biblically speaking, after Pentecost the Apostles first proclaimed Jesus whom they had personally experienced and only then could they reflect on what they experienced in his person.** Yes, all action is initiated by God, by his self-revelation. All evangelism begins with God revealing himself in our lives which we then proclaim to the world. Think of all the incidents in the Gospels where a man or woman meets Jesus, experiences him, is healed and forgiven by him, and although admonished by the Lord to tell no one they cannot help themselves and they immediately run out to tell the whole community who Jesus is. **Faith** **impels action**. Yet, action without reflection, active ministry without interiority is not truly evangelization; it is only a display of egoism that leads to division and confusion. We all know examples of this from our own lives, examples when either we, or others in ministry, have neglected needed spiritual direction, prayer and meditation because we have wanted “to do” more of what is demanded of us, the result being a proclamation of ourselves, our needs, our thoughts rather than the presentation of Jesus the Christ of whom we are to be Icons in his servanthood. Yes, there is always interplay between **Evangelistic activity** and **missionary spirituality**; between **action** and **reflection,** between receptivity and proclamation of the Gospel in the world.

Perhaps some of you know of the *Camino de Santiago* or the Way of St. James in Spain. It is a nearly 1000 mile pilgrimage from the south of France to the northwest coast of Spain to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela and the shrine of St. James. In the *Camino* people begin by walking. They start with action, and along the way they reflect on the meaning of what they experience. It is in the walk itself that understanding develops.

**Evangelization as an Apostolic Activity**

**Presenting the Person of Jesus**

Evangelization is an apostolic activity. The Apostles took what had been their experience of the person of Jesus, and they went out announcing what they had seen, and heard, and touched. They presented Jesus Christ to the world. As they did this, they then reflected on what they had experienced and proclaimed and came to a deeper knowledge, a deeper faith, a deeper spirit, and they eventually Christianized the culture.

Their preaching was *kerygmatic.* Their message was that God had visited his people in the person of Jesus Christ, whom they had seen and heard and touched and loved and betrayed. They proclaimed a Gospel that Jesus was the Son of God who came among us as a man, who truly lived, suffered, died on the cross, was buried, and then rose again on the third day. They were so convicted by this experience that they were transformed into ardent preachers of that message, intent on sharing it with everyone, intent on acting on this radical experience. They couldn’t not speak of this, and speak openly. In doing so, they brought, we are told, thousands of men and women to faith in the Christ.

Let us look at the example of St. Paul. (**Cf: Acts 9: 1-22**)

So, too, in some sense is today’s evangelization. It begins with the kerygma, the apostolic proclamation of their experience of Jesus. We too have met Jesus in his Word, and our ecclesial experience of the person of Jesus is announced to others. It begins by acting on the faith which is the Church’s faith, the faith of the Apostles, and in that kerygmatic announcement, in the presentation of the person of Jesus, our understanding of what we ourselves have experienced deepens as we take time to reflect. This is how our faith grows, and how Christian culture grows, how the Church develops and matures.

**Evangelization as Diaconal Activity**

I would suggest evangelization a very *diaconal activity* because it is an activity that brings the person of Jesus to our contemporary culture, and conversely, it brings today’s culture to the Lord. It ties together the human experience of today’s world ***and*** the Christ who is our Lord and Brother. We deacons are called to do just that, to be that bridge between faith and everyday life, a bridge between those in need of the Gospel and the inexhaustible love of the person of Jesus our Lord. We serve both God and man in this endeavor. We have our feet both in the lives of the poor and in the life of the Church.

Let us look at the examples ofSts. Philip, deacon and Stephen, deacon and protomartyr. (**Philip: Acts 8: 4-8; Acts 8: 26-40. Stephen: Acts 7: 51-60**)

The deacon Stephen zealously, boldly, frankly proclaimed Jesus to an unbelieving crowd. He had a sense of urgency and fearlessness in doing so because his heart had been converted by the preaching of the Apostles. It was in his evangelistic activity, that he saw the heavens opened, and he experienced anew the risen Christ. His contemplative moment came after his active witness. His interior life was made known after his fearless, bold and zealous presentation of the person of Jesus, his preaching of the Gospel.

Here is what Benedict XVI had to say about Stephen and the New Evangelization:

*“St. Stephen is a model for all of those who want to place themselves at the service of the New Evangelization. He demonstrated that the newness of the Gospel proclamation does not consist primarily in the use of methods or original technology, which certainly have their utility, but rather in being filled with the Holy Spirit and letting ourselves be guided by Him. The newness of the Gospel proclamation is rooted in the depth of one’s immersion into the mystery of Christ, assimilating his Word and his presence in the Eucharist so that He himself, the living Christ may speak and work in the one who is sent. In essence, the evangelizer becomes capable of carrying Christ to others in an efficacious manner when he lives in Christ and the newness of the Gospel is shown in his life. We pray to the Virgin Mary so that the Church in this Year of Faith may see an increase in men and women like St. Stephen who know how to give a convincing and courageous witness to the Lord Jesus.*

**Evangelization as profoundly Marian**

Yet evangelization is profoundly HUMBLE and docile. Let us conclude our reflections on evangelization by looking at our Blessed Mother Mary who is the greatest evangelizer for she always presents Christ to the world.

“There is a Marian ‘style’ to the Church’s work of evangelization… She constantly contemplates the mystery of God in our world, in human history and in our daily lives… This interlay of justice and tenderness, of contemplation and concern for others, is what makes the ecclesial community look to Mary as a model for evangelization.” (ED 288)

Scripture: the Visitation **Luke 1: 46-55;** Wedding at Cana **John 2: 1-12**

In both of these accounts, we see Mary as magnifying her son Jesus. Her soul magnifies him by her intimacy with him and her participation in his life, death and resurrection. Yet, she very boldly presents him to the world when she tells the wedding planner, “Do whatever he tells you.” Yes, do whatever Jesus tells you…. This is an evangelistic message.

Vatican Council II presented Mary in the context of the Mystery of Christ and of the Church (cf. **Lumen Gentium, 52-68**). Pope Paul VI declared her the “Star of Evangelization” in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in 1975. Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI have called her the “Star of the New Evangelization. “ Pope Francis has called her Mary, Mother of Evangelization.” (EG 284) She is therefore the model of faith, hope and love. She is the first helper who brings disciples to the Master (cf. **Jn 2: 1-12**). In the Upper Room she is the Mother of the believers (cf. **Acts 1:14**).

As Mother of the Redeemer, Mary becomes a witness of God’s love. She freely fulfills God’s will. She is the strong woman, who along with John, remains at the foot of the Cross. She always intercedes for us and accompanies the faithful in their journey as far as the cross of the Lord.

As Mother and Queen she is a sign of hope for suffering and needy peoples. Today she is the “Missionary” who will aid us in the difficulties of our time and with her nearness open the hearts of men and women to the faith.

We fix our gaze on Mary. She will help us to proclaim the message of salvation to all men and women, so that they too may become agents of Evangelization. Mary is the Mother of the Church. Through her presence, may the Church become a home for many and Mother of all people.

Yes, our diaconal ministry can be modeled after Mary who humbly, yet boldly presented Jesus to the world. We too are to give humble yet bold witness to the Gospel which is Jesus. Ours is a vocation of humble service, not arrogant rule, but ours is also a vocation of boldly proclaiming the Gospel, proclaiming Jesus. ***There is no place for the*** ***timid here***. We must teach and preach boldly, with conviction and faith arising from a pure conscience, a conscience that can only be found in a profound humility to the Word of God, i.e., the Gospel which has been entrusted to us at our ordination. Evangelization is a humble undertaking for it demands a spirit of obedience to the Jesus we proclaim, to the Word that has been entrusted to us, to the Gospel which we have nurtured in our minds and hearts.

We cannot become the Icon of Jesus the Servant, and in that way present him to an increasingly pagan culture, unless first we have welcomed the Word in our hearts, treasured it, nurtured it, obeyed it, followed it, and trusted it. *Mary is the greatest of all the* *evangelists*. Mary would not have become the Mother of God had she not first accepted and kept the Word of God in her Immaculate Heart. We cannot become the Icon of Jesus the Servant if we do not first hold in purity of heart the Word entrusted to us. Mary could not have endured the passion and death of her Son without cradling in her heart the Word that had come to her. We cannot endure the trials and difficulties of ministry without knowing and nurturing and loving the Word entrusted to us as deacons of the Church.

The basis of sharing the person of Jesus with others, *in other words the basis of evangelization,* is a **humble life in Christ**. We are called to know Christ and to make Him known. The fundamental activity, therefore, of those called to be missionaries is receptivity to God, of *complete docility* to the Holy Spirit. **Receiving the Word of God is the condition for doing the work of an evangelist**. This is so evident, isn’t it, in the rite of ordination of a deacon, when the bishop hands the Book of the Gospels to the newly ordained and says, *“Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you have become. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what* *you teach. ”*It is not possible," St. John Paul II states, “to bear witness to Christ without reflecting his image, which is made alive in us by grace and the power of the Spirit." In order to pass on the Gospel to others it must have first permeated our lives. "An essential characteristic "of this **missionary spirituality**, the pope tells us, “is intimate communion with Christ.