

DISPUTED QUESTIONS: THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

In the Middle Ages, the disputed question was one of the major forms of academic investigation. A master of theology would pose a question on which great authorities seemed to disagree, then entertain objections from fellow masters and students. After others attempted to reconcile the various authorities, the master would give a determination that resolved the question.

In our form of the disputed question, two student brothers approach a difficult contemporary issue from different angles in order to reveal its complexity. These essays are meant to be complementary, not contradictory; read together, they reveal new facets of the truth.

QUESTION

The New Evangelization is the watchword for contemporary Catholicism. Bl. John Paul II wrote about it frequently, and Benedict XVI has made it a major theme of his pontificate, even setting up a new Vatican dicastery dedicated to spreading the New Evangelization. Both popes have emphasized that this newness does not constitute a radical break with the past, but rather flows out from the wellspring of history and tradition; whenever the Gospel is proclaimed, new and old must intermingle because “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever” (Heb 13:8). Jesus says that “every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old” (Mt 13:52). So what about the New Evangelization is new, and what is old?

THE OLD: THE PRODIGAL GOSPEL

Philip Neri Reese, O.P.

When someone asks a question about the seemingly obvious, the result can often be uncomfortable. I'm not talking about "dumb" questions and the awkward pause of groping tact that follows. I'm talking about the simple questions that turn out to be stumbers. Take Euthyphro, the main character in Plato's dialogue of the same name. He was pretty confident that he knew what "piety" was. It's obvious, right? Then Socrates began his barrage of questions, and the poor man was doomed to look the fool for the rest of history. The brutal fact is that sometimes what seems obvious just isn't.

If you've ever been asked about the "New Evangelization," you may have found yourself in a similar place. No one doubts its existence: Pope Paul VI first spoke of it in his *Evangelii Nuntianti*, Bl. Pope John Paul II, who made it one of the themes of his pontificate, wrote of it frequently – not the least in his documents *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, *Redemptoris Missio*, and *Christifideles Laici* – and Pope Benedict XVI's recent *Ubicumque et Semper* established a whole dicastery devoted to it. Something doesn't get a dicastery if it doesn't exist.

But for all the obviousness of its existence, it's not hard to find oneself at a loss when confronted with the simple question, "What is the New Evangelization?" This admission should not be a cause for shame, nor should it strike anyone as impious. On the contrary, the very first task that the Holy Father has set before the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization is "to reflect on the theological and pastoral meaning of the New Evangelization." If we desire a more effective engagement with it and a more affective transformation by it, we must first grow in a deeper understanding

of it. The brief essay that follows is an attempt to make some small contribution toward this goal.

I

It seems like a safe bet that the uniqueness of the New Evangelization will be tied up with the word “new.” After all, talking about a “new” evangelization implies that we are not talking about an “old” evangelization. Isn’t it safe to assume that what makes the New Evangelization of special interest will be something other than what it shares in common with the old? If that’s right, it seems like the task before us should be easy: all we have to do is find out what’s new about the New Evangelization, and we’ve got our answer.

But as we raise our foot to take this step, it may be helpful to notice that the field lying before us is full of land mines. If we want to get to our destination safely, we should start by figuring out where we *don’t* want to step. So let’s begin with what the New Evangelization *isn’t*.

First, and perhaps most obviously, the New Evangelization is not absolutely new. We are not talking about something radically innovative. For if it is truly a work of evangelization, then it must be an activity of the Church that traces its lineage all the way back to the command given to the apostles by the Resurrected Lord: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations.” Thus, the New Evangelization cannot constitute a total break with the evangelization that came before it. The same fount of divine commission is the source of all evangelization, new and old.

The clearest implication of this is that affirming the “newness” of the New Evangelization cannot mean any change in the message of the Gospel. St. Paul is almost terrifying in his forcefulness on this point: “Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a Gospel other than the one that we preached to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, and now I say again, if anyone preaches to you a Gospel other than the one that you received,



JAMES TISSOT - THE PRODIGAL SON IN MODERN LIFE: THE RETURN

let that one be accursed!” (Gal. 1:8-9). If Jesus Christ “is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8), then it follows that the preaching of Jesus Christ must be the same yesterday and today and forever. Put simply, the first land mine to avoid on our path is concluding that the “new” in the New Evangelization has to do with its content.

If we imagine that this land mine of the absolutely new lies as far to the left of the field as we can go, there will be another lying in wait should we attempt to cross on the field’s farthest right. This error will assume that there is simply nothing new about the New Evangelization – no qualifications, full stop. It will say that the “New Evangelization” is just a catchy phrase for what the Church has always done, that it is nothing more than the “old” evangelization, repackaged.

Why not take this path? Three reasons immediately come to mind that reveal the weakness of this interpretation. The first is that, *de facto*, it makes the claim that the New Evangelization

doesn't exist. But it clearly does exist, and more than just nominally, as has been testified to by the teaching of three holy and learned pontiffs. Second, the position contradicts itself: it claims that the New Evangelization just *is* the old evangelization, without qualification, but then proceeds to qualify this claim with the word "repackaged." Third, and perhaps most importantly, this word, "repackaged," needs to be unpacked – why would this repackaging necessarily have to be trivial or inconsequential? A significant repackaging of the Gospel could be precisely the thing that differentiates the "old" and the "new" evangelizations. Thus, we need to walk a more nuanced road.

II

Now that we have clearly established the limits beyond which we must not pass, we can continue along our *via negativa*, for there are certainly other ways, more tempting and more plausible, that should be avoided as we try to understand the New Evangelization. I would now like to consider and reject two such understandings. Both attempt to find some middle-ground between the extremes outlined above, and thus each has the appearance of a scribe "who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven," and "who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old" (Mt. 13:52). Each will appear to do justice both to what is "old" and to what is "new" in the New Evangelization, but neither will discover the truly unique characteristic that makes it what it is.

The first interpretation to be considered is that the New Evangelization is an extension of the perennial evangelization of the Church, but that it differs from the "old" evangelization insofar as it adopts *new means* in achieving the goal of spreading the Gospel. The plausibility of this approach is strengthened when we consider the amount of ecclesial attention given in recent years to two themes, both of which touch on the issue of means. The first is that of inculturation, which Bl. John Paul II describes in no. 52 of his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*. He says that inculturation is "the incarnation of the Gospel" within

various cultures, that it draws into the Church the good elements found therein, and that “today it is particularly urgent.” Thus, a reinvigoration of inculturation suggests itself as an untapped tool for spreading the Gospel. The second theme is the use of new technology in social communication. The Pontifical Council for Social Communications’ 2002 document *The Church and Internet* explicitly raises the issue of how the Internet can be utilized for the New Evangelization.

In each case, the question being raised is: “By what medium is the message of the Gospel best presented?” Is the missionary goal of the Church best served by finding ways of articulating the Gospel according to the patterns of thought, social structures, art, etc., of the cultures being evangelized? Do Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and the like, offer opportunities to preach the Gospel in new ways that demand exploration? Could it be that the central trait of the New Evangelization is to be found in its openness to new and creative ways of promoting the Gospel?

No. Tempting as such an answer may be, it cannot avoid doing a disservice to the *old* evangelization, presupposing too strong a difference. The Church has always been open to new and creative ways of communicating the truth of Jesus Christ, just as she has always been open to the project of inculturation. In evidence of the former, just consider Fulton Sheen, who predated the New Evangelization and yet stands as a paragon of how new modes of communication can be placed in the service of the evangelical mission of the Church. Moreover, if you’re looking for a blatant example of ninth-century inculturation, treat yourself to a reading from the Old Saxon *Heliand*, a retelling of the Gospel story in a full-blooded Germanic mode (Jesus is born in the “hill-fort” of Bethlehem). Or, if you prefer something more recent, consult the seventeenth-century *Huron Carol*, originally written in the Wendat language by St. John de Brebeuf. The popular English translation of the carol swaps Jesus’ swaddling clothes for a “ragged robe of rabbit skin.” If history bears witness to a constant tradition of the Church embracing new means of preaching the good news

of Jesus Christ, then the uniqueness of the New Evangelization must lie elsewhere.

We turn now to the final interpretive land mine, which also turns out to lie closest to the true path. This answer differs from those that have gone before, in that it would locate the central characteristic of the New Evangelization not in something objective, but subjective. That is, on this interpretation, what is “new” about the New Evangelization is the personal experience of Jesus Christ that radically transforms the lives of those engaging in the work of evangelization. Thus, the New Evangelization will stand in strong continuity with the evangelism of the Church throughout history, proclaiming the same content (Christ) and perhaps using the same means to do so, but it differs insofar as it emphasizes the newness of the *agents* of this evangelization.

The argument would go something like this: the life of faith is an ever-deepening personal encounter with Jesus Christ. It is an event, not an abstract idea, and it is impossible to walk away from this encounter unchanged. The transformational and experiential nature of this event speaks in a particular way to our world of fragmented relationships and dehumanizing social structures. What is demanded in a unique way in our age, then, is a personal invitation to meet Jesus Christ that issues from someone who has both met Him and been transformed by that experience. This personal invitation, from someone who has already been personally transformed, has the power to speak to our contemporaries in a privileged way because it offers healing to our contemporary world in precisely the areas wherein it is most wounded.

While one might be justified in objecting that the subjective experience of Christ on the part of the Church’s evangelists has *always* been of great importance (isn’t it true that in *every* age the saints are the best evangelists?), this is not the approach that I would like to take in setting aside this final interpretation. Instead, let’s accept the premise that the work of evangelization today relies more heavily upon personal witness to a transforming encounter with Christ than it ever has in past ages. Even if this is true, it still

seems that this new emphasis on subjectivity – so important to the personalism of Bl. John Paul II and new ecclesial movements like Luigi Giussani's *Communion and Liberation* – leaves something essential to the New Evangelization unaccounted for. The concluding section of this essay will attempt to bring to light what has been left out in this last interpretation, and finally reveal what is truly “new” about the New Evangelization.

III

Recall the parable of the Prodigal Son: a wealthy father is asked by his youngest son for an early inheritance, which the son then squanders in a life of sin, leaving him destitute. When he returns, dejected and ashamed, he asks only for a place among the slaves in his father's household. But the father, who had been gazing out into the distance, waiting for his son to return, clothes the boy in a fine robe, puts a ring on his finger, and arranges a feast in honor of his homecoming. It is a parable of God the Father's infinite mercy, surely, but it can also help us to understand the nature of evangelization, old and new.

It's easy to interpret the squandering of the son's inheritance as sin, by which we are ejected from the Father's household. This interpretation wouldn't be wrong, but there is a different way to look at it.

In part, sin is the failure to recognize and know the Father as He truly is. Thus, the prodigal self-exile of the son renders him unable to imagine that his father would have mercy upon him and welcome him back. It blinds him to what his father is truly like. This, far more than any physical distance, is what divides the son from his father. Evangelization, then, will be the searching gaze of the father, going out to the horizons of the earth to find his lost son and draw him back. It will also be – and this touches upon the final interpretation given above – the embrace of the father that transforms the prodigal, making him an heir once again. The mission of evangelization within the Church is about restoring

mankind to right relationship with the Eternal Father. It is the task of teaching who God really is.

But there is an element missing from our account thus far. What of the *older* son, the one who never left the Father's house? If sin is a misunderstanding of who the father is, then the older son suffers from it as well. Where the younger son was blind to the mercy that his father would show him, the older son was blind to the generosity that the father was *already* showing him: "Everything I have is yours." Both sons fail to know their father. Both sons need evangelization.

And this, I propose, is the true heart of the New Evangelization. This is the note that allows us to differentiate the old from the new, while at the same time doing justice to all the true elements to be found in the various interpretations above. The "old" evangelization is the evangelization that targets the younger son. It is the evangelization that strikes out to the horizons of the earth, teaching those who live far from Christ and His Church who God really is and what the Father is really like. It is the mission *ad gentes*. The "new" evangelization is the evangelization of the older son. For there are many who do *not* live "far" from Christ and His Church, indeed, many who remain clearly in the household of God, and yet still misunderstand who the Father is. There are many within the Church today who fail to recognize the generous love that is being bestowed on them through life in the Church. These, too, need evangelizing.

Bl. John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio* bears this out. He says, "it does not seem justified to regard as identical the situation of a people which has never known Jesus Christ and that of a people which has known him, accepted him and then rejected him, while continuing to live in a culture which in large part has absorbed Gospel principles and values. These are two basically different situations with regard to the faith." The old evangelization is the mission *ad gentes*. The New Evangelization is the re-proposal of the Gospel to those who have already heard it, and yet fail to appreciate the gift they have been given in it.

Cardinal Wuerl, in his letter on the New Evangelization, makes the same point. He exhorts, “we have to be able to repropose our belief in Christ and his Gospel for a hearing among those who are convinced that they already know the faith and it holds no interest for them. We have to invite them to hear it all over again, this time for the first time.” This is what is “new” about the New Evangelization: not the means, not the agents, but the target.

I hope, then, the next time you’re asked about the New Evangelization, it won’t be a painful experience of struggling to state the seemingly obvious. You know the land mines to avoid. You don’t have to talk about “tweeting” for God. You don’t have to talk about incorporating African dance into next week’s Mass. You don’t even have to talk about Giussani. All you have to say is that it’s about re-proposing the Gospel. It’s about evangelizing the prodigal’s older brother.

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THE NEW: ENCOUNTER AS WITNESS

Gregory Maria Pine, O.P.

Our modern ears almost always associate “new” with “improved.” The marriage has been canonized by the advertising industry, where “new and improved” is roughly convertible with “excellent.” The slogan has enjoyed such widespread use that one only rarely sees attempts to market a product by directing attention to its constancy (Hershey’s chocolate bar comes to mind). Modern man is thereby conditioned to seek after the faster, sleeker, and more efficient.

Yet the cult of novelty, despite its dominance in the marketplace, is not without competing philosophies of progress. The medieval

tradition (perhaps seen best in scholastic theology) offers an alternative worldview – that of employing authorities. Within this framework, the conservative, established, and agreed-upon is preferred to what comes on the scene new and untested. To establish the legitimacy of a philosophical claim or theological position, it was incumbent upon the medieval theologian to root it in the tradition, in the writings, for instance, of a St. Augustine, St. Severinus Boethius, or Pseudo-Dionysius.

At times it can be difficult to determine where a particular event or trend falls within this spectrum of novelty and tradition. One such phenomenon in the life of the Church is the New Evangelization. The very name promises something new and vital, while simultaneously as old as the Gospel it aims to spread. Is the New Evangelization to be understood as the same evangelization that characterized the Church as commissioned at the Ascension and empowered at Pentecost, or is it to be understood as a novelty—a new horizon of activity for the Church militant? While the response depends in large part on how and in what terms the question is couched, it seems plain to assert that the Church can respond with a confident “Yes.” She makes her selection in that she chooses both.

It is important to stress both traditional and novel elements in the New Evangelization, for without the tradition the New Evangelization is rendered unintelligible, and without the novelty one might wonder whether the Church has simply resigned itself to her detractors’ accusations of unenlightened retrenchment. By maintaining both, the Church draws from the current of the tradition in which she has stood for two millennia, all the while preaching a culturally personalized truth corresponding to the needs of the human heart in the modern age.

The evidence of continuity is manifold in the New Evangelization. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI grounds this continuity in the Church’s very nature: “Evangelization is the grace and vocation proper to the Church,

her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize” (14). Thus, wherever the Church is found, there too is evangelization. It follows that inasmuch as the Church has a claim to continuity, so too do its efforts of evangelization. But beyond this fundamental identity with the Church’s very existence, the claim to continuity extends to a number of other vantage points.

The New Evangelization also attains to the same goal as its predecessor – the salvation of souls. On this point, Paul VI writes,

[T]he presentation of the Gospel message is not an optional contribution for the Church. It is the duty incumbent on her by the command of the Lord Jesus, so that people can believe and be saved [...] It is a question of people’s salvation (EN 5).

In every age, the Church has insisted upon the pastoral primacy of saving souls. All evangelization worthy of the name is ultimately ordered to heaven.

Paul VI emphasizes later in the same document that evangelization can never be reduced to a temporal project, particularly one of temporal liberation: Doing so “would reduce [the Church’s] aims to a man-centered goal; the salvation of which she is the messenger would be reduced to material well-being. Her activity, forgetful of all spiritual and religious preoccupation, would become initiatives of the political or social order. But if this were so, the Church would lose her fundamental meaning” (EN 32). It is clear from the magisterium that the New Evangelization, as inaugurated by Paul VI, understands itself to be rooted in the same salvific vein as the evangelization that came before.

The New Evangelization draws its impetus and inspiration from the same source, namely the Holy Spirit. On this point, Paul VI is very clear: “It must be said that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization: it is He who impels each individual to proclaim the Gospel, and it is He who in the depths of consciences causes the word of salvation to be accepted and understood” (EN

75). This has been the case since the very inception of the Church's evangelizing efforts at Pentecost, when three thousand were added to the nascent believing community. In every age, the Church is born of the Spirit.

This is not to devalue the work of those who labor in the fields on behalf of Christ and the Gospel, but merely to affirm that the movement of every evangelizer begins in a movement of grace. It should be noted that the Church has emphasized the need for a greater participation among the laity in its work of evangelization, and this represents a genuine development in her teaching. The Second Vatican Council taught that, since the Church is evangelical in her very nature, evangelization is the duty of *every* Christian (*Lumen Gentium* 17). Thus, while the primary agent of evangelization remains constant, there has been development in the Church's emphasis on the universality of the secondary agents by whom Christ is proclaimed.

There is also clear continuity in what evangelization communicates: the Gospel. From a simple etymological standpoint, wherever and whenever there is evangelization, there is the Gospel (in Greek, "euangelion"). Any divergence from this foundation results in mere proselytization. On this point Bl. John Paul II was adamant. In a 1983 address to Latin American Bishops, he wrote, "Evangelization cannot be new in its content, since its theme is always the one Gospel given in Jesus Christ. If it arose from ourselves and our situation, it would not be Gospel but mere human invention." The New Evangelization preaches the very same "Good News" preached by St. Peter on the morning of Pentecost.

Having established a few ways in which the New Evangelization is rooted in the tradition, it is proper now to examine what makes it truly new.

Few would deny that the Catholic Church is on different cultural footing than it was one hundred years ago. In this country, for instance, the Church had established a considerable infrastructure that facilitated its sacramental, catechetical, and educational ends. Institutions such as ethnic parishes, charitable organizations

founded under religious auspices (Knights of Columbus, Ancient Order of Hibernians, etc.), Confraternities and Sodalities, and an expansive educational system represented the most prominent Catholic elements in decidedly Christian culture. The work of propagating the faith fell mainly along the lines of pastoral care and the Christian education of youth.

But, over the course of the century, Christendom suffered a massive cultural change. The Western world fell prey to the ravaging effects of secularization, privatization of faith, and religious pluralism. What has resulted is a religious vacuum. Bl. John Paul II described this phenomenon in the European context as a

loss of Europe's Christian memory and heritage, accompanied by a kind of practical agnosticism and religious indifference whereby many Europeans give the impression of living without spiritual roots and somewhat like heirs who have squandered a patrimony entrusted to them by history (Ecclesia in Europa 7).

In many ways, the same can be said of the United States and the West at large. As Cardinal Avery Dulles observed in his essay *John Paul II and the New Evangelization*, with the culture thus destabilized, the Church can no longer rely upon the same political and sociological factors to provide a salutary climate for the propagation of the faith.

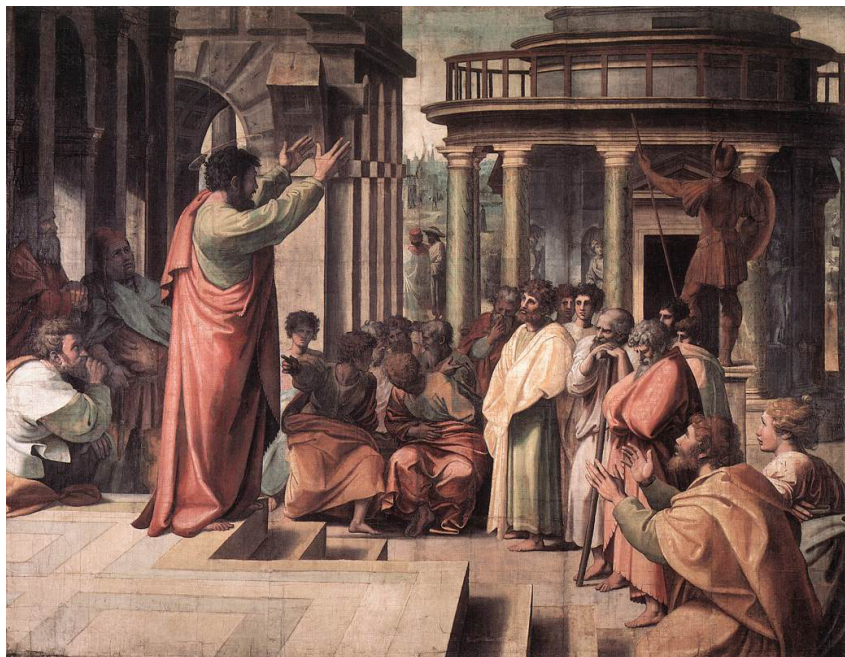
In the vacuum thus generated, a substantial substitute to the faith's content has yet to be found. Western culture is often described as post-everything: post-Modern, post-Christian, etc. It is nihilistic and dismissive of ultimate questions. Walker Percy posits in *Love in the Ruins* that what remains is neo-pagan—blissfully unreactionary, virginal in its preconceptions, and thereby ripe for the picking. While there is a certain truth in this assessment, the deep vein of post-Christianity in western culture adds a further dynamic, which seems at first blush to be an untested corporate prejudice against the faith. The words of G. K. Chesterton come

to mind: “Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried.” It appears then that a widespread and insidious cultural prejudice against Christianity is working to undermine the progress of the faith. How then does the New Evangelization respond?

One of the central tenets of the New Evangelization is its understanding of witness: “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses” (EN 41). In a culture where many have forgotten how to live their humanity, it becomes unclear at what level the evangelizer engages. In order for grace to elevate and perfect nature, a stable and intact nature is presupposed. It is into this dynamic that the witness is called.

Cardinal Ratzinger, in an address to catechists and religion teachers in December 2000, explained it thus, “To evangelize means: to show this path—to teach the art of living. At the beginning of his public life Jesus says: I have come to evangelize the poor (Luke 4:18); this means: I have the response to your fundamental question; I will show you the path of life, the path toward happiness—rather: I am that path.” The witness is one who can engage at the level of humanity. Mindful that modern man is not to be claimed for Christ by a mere discourse, the witness reveals through his own life that faith is integral to human existence.

But what constitutes an integral human existence? Each individual experiences at some level a combination of fundamental needs: the need for truth, happiness, justice, and ultimate meaning. Without a sufficient or intelligible answer to these questions or a means by which to conduct the search, life becomes intolerable. Different ideologies propose different solutions. The Stoic is told to bear life’s vagaries nobly. The nihilist is told to stare back into the void. But when a particular worldview fails to offer a satisfactory response to man’s inexorable need for meaning, the questions return with ever-greater urgency.



RAPHAEL - ST PAUL PREACHING IN ATHENS

To this manifest need, the Christian is offered a Person, the Incarnate Son of God. Msgr. Luigi Giussani cites often in his writings the meeting of Jesus and the first disciples in John 1 as the quintessential answer to man's existential need. What that first conversation engendered in the disciples was certitude: "If I should not believe this man, then I should not even believe my own eyes." This certitude is the life and breath of the Christian witness.

The Christian witness teaches those whom he meets that the answer to man's search for meaning is the mystery of the Divine Life, and that only by gazing into what is profoundly real can one hope to find happiness. "Unless you become like little children..." The response is to be sought not in recoiling from ugliness, reducing expectation, or anesthetizing desire, it is rather to be found in laying oneself open to total meaning, to live life, as the Jesuit de Grandmaison wrote, "tormented by the glory of Christ, pierced by his love, with a wound that will not heal until heaven."

In so doing, the witness cannot help but be luminously and brilliantly attractive. The witness illustrates powerfully that he cannot supply for himself the answer to his questioning. As Msgr. Giussani states: "Life is a hunger, thirst, and passion for an ultimate object, which looms over the horizon, and yet always lies beyond it. When this is recognized, man becomes a tireless searcher." He lives emphatically the reality that only Christ, the very author of his desires, can supply for them a satisfactory answer.

The Gospels give numerous accounts of this precise dynamic in Christ's public ministry. In his encounters with the woman at the well, with Zaccheus, and with Nicodemus, Christ appeals to the individual at the level of this inexorable need: "The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw'" (John 4:15). Thus, as He promised, Christ provides not only the truth and the life of the New Evangelization, but also the way.

Only with the above in mind can the various elements of the New Evangelization be integrated. The Popes in the last half-century have encouraged the use of the various modes of social communication now available. This is essential for the dissemination of the Gospel, but social networking tools cannot be expected to work evangelical magic. Paul VI writes:

Nevertheless the use of the means of social communication for evangelization presents a challenge: through them the evangelical message should reach vast numbers of people, but with the capacity of piercing the conscience of each individual, of implanting itself in his heart as though he were the only person being addressed, with all his most individual and personal qualities, and evoke an entirely personal adherence and commitment (EN 45).

The genuine Christian encounter must guide the evangelizer even in the use of social networking tools.

What is more, there has been mention of the New Evangelization as directed to *cultures* in addition to *individuals*. Vast cultures

and territories once thought Christian have succumbed to the gravity of the secular slump and, consequently, the need for re-evangelization on a corporate level is pressing. Again, the popes do not have in mind a mere general absolution of culture. Even with respect to cultures, the primary battleground remains the individual human heart. What is at stake is not the salvation of an abstract concept like humanity, but rather of each and every individual man and woman.

The New Evangelization is thus played out at the dramatic level of each human heart, and it is only capable of attaining its end through the actions of saints—men and women alive in grace. For this reason, Pope Benedict XVI, then Cardinal Ratzinger, insisted on the necessity of prayer: “We ourselves cannot gather men. We must acquire them by God for God. All methods are empty without the foundation of prayer. The word of the announcement must always be drenched in an intense life of prayer.” In this, the agents of the New Evangelization become deiform, for in His own public ministry, Jesus preached by day, and prayed by night. And so in imitation of Christ, the New Evangelization recognizes its only hope in the transformative power of God’s grace through which every blessing is obtained.

Gregory Maria Pine entered the Order of Preachers in 2010.