



**To the baptized of the Valleyfield
Diocese**

Follow-Up to be provided

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Committee for the Future in parishes

I- Committee for the Future... in Parishes.

Assembly of Quebec's Catholic Bishops, Community Councils and Ministers

"The missionary turning point in Christian communities"

Becoming a missionary church – a "Church stepping out" following "The Joy of the Gospel"

January 2016, 34 pages

Introduction :

Beginning from the miracle of Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4), despite today's challenges in the "new world" that we live in, we must transition towards the larger picture and become a (missionary) "Church stepping out" (p.6).

Development:

- 1- The church is missionary – this is her fundamental activity
- 2- Implementation - courses of action and gestures
- 3- The image of a renewed Church

1- Foundation of a Missionary Church

The religious roots of Quebec originate in the Church's missionary activity. Throughout the centuries, Quebec's Church has confined itself to a situation of Christianity that is barely sustainable in 2019.

Today, the most prominent challenge faced by the Church in Quebec is "missionary conversion", meaning changing our habits, practices, attitudes and styles. This requires a "letting go" (avoiding trying to control everything) and a "spiritual availability", while also requiring a return to our source and foundation that we must undertake (*Ad Gentes* # 2) translated in (EN # 14) : "*The Church exists to evangelize.*"

What results in missionary actions: favouring life, joy, and happiness in fullness as God wishes us through Jesus Christ. (Jn 10:10). This mission is given to the Church by a "God turned toward humanity". The mission of the Church aims at announcing to the world and demonstrating God's infinite love. That is the Church's vision of the future that must be put into action.

2- Implementation: Courses of Action and Gestures

"The message has to focus on the essentials, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary. The message is simplified, while losing none of its depth and truth, and thus becomes all the more forceful and convincing." (EG # 35). Those are the criteria that "will determine pastoral action plans that will serve communities that have made choices and elaborated their orientations. These are also the criteria for all evaluations of pastoral actions of a community (parish, diocese, and other ecclesiastic groups).

This tells us concretely "what we **are** as a Church (organization, style, attitudes, etc.), what we **do**, (practices, behaviours, etc.) or what we **say** (words and discussions) that mark the essential message of Christ... The structure, acts and words of the Church require conversion" (EG # 34)

(p. 12). At this moment, the Church must go beyond its interior world, its self-referring system (leaving behind the ministry of maintenance for a ministry of accompaniment) and seek to center itself on the humility of God and the fact that the Church is sent by Him. In other words, the Church must focus on humanity by serving others rather than its own self-preservation as an institution, which serves as a premise for change in its practices, its pastoral programs, as well as its organisation... Concretely, “it is the customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures that need conversion.” (EG # 27)

Consequently, all those baptized in a Christian community are touched by what is discussed in the paragraph above, regardless of their commitment and/or the ecclesial service. This should renew ordinary pastoral practices to make room for creative innovations benefiting those baptized that have distanced themselves from Christian or other communities. Therefore, all pastoral activities have a missionary orientation. For example among others, Christian initiation is based on catechumenate and /or pastoral baptismal ministry. (p. 15)

At risk : It should not be believed that there is little to change from meeting people who are distanced from the Church in this or that circumstance. It requires a serious evaluation of pastoral practices that (currently) respond more to an obsolete bureaucracy with requests that must enter the small pre-established boxes (secretary - answering machine - registration forms - screens - devices, etc.). Yet the Gospel demands the encounter with the other (nearness) in its entirety. (EG # 88)

For a pastoral or diocesan evaluation, see the questionnaire from pages 17-19-22-24-27-29-32.

From the perspective of a parish

Criteria to orient the remodelling of a parish, a structure “that is not obsolete” (p. 20). These criteria can also serve to assist in evaluating certain groups. The parish community and its leaders must:

- Avoid contenting themselves with the status quo ;
- Put into place a “living in proximity to populations, families, and their personal experiences.” (EG #28) It is one of the conditions necessary to evangelisation.(EG #24) ;
- Promote a parish that is “a place of living Communion and participation” (EG #63)

3- A New Face of the Church: All members God’s people are agents in the mission of evangelisation.

* We are no longer disciples and missionaries; we are missionary-disciples (EG #120);

* Everyone must be engaged in the Church by recognizing their respective charisma (EG #106);

* The baptized and laity (men and women) shall not work autonomously, but as a team in conjunction with the priests. “(The team of men and women) share pastoral responsibilities with priests, accompany ... and offer new contributions to theological reflection” (EG #103);

* The baptized are called upon to mature as evangelizers... called to open renewed paths... called upon for better training (EG # 121) (EG # 160-168 ; 169-173) ; better support and preparation of pastoral ministries. Hence, a formation based on missionary activity in the light of Scripture; training on meeting the poor. (EG # 197-198) ;

* Training for accompaniment ... (EG # 77 ; 169-173) ;

* Avoid "the temptation of using all available resources only for the parish's maintenance. (EG #102);

* Become a "Church with open doors", a place of welcome and hospitality. Otherwise, it will impede life and the deepening of faith. (EG # 70)

A process of ecclesial discernment

All baptized people (communities and particular Churches) are concerned in discernment about the paths to be taken because all are invited to be "missionary oriented." (EG # 20; 30; 108) The different councils, or the different local teams, are invited to welcome all who will contribute to carry out the objective pursued: the proclamation of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. (Mt 28)

Conclusion

Let us take again the sentences of the theologian, Joseph Moingt s.j. : "Let us install a responsible laity (- with the presence of men and women - appointed and delegated, able to organize and animate the life of the community, its prayer, its apostolate, its activities and its services) at the base , within and at the head of the Christian communities, with the agreement and under the control of the local Bishop. "In Still Believe Free Interview on the Present and the Future of Catholicism" Ways Tried, 2013, 254 pages.

II- To help the Committees for the Future in Parishes (CAP)

**SUGGESTED QUESTIONS TO EVALUATE the MISSIONARY FUNCTION of a PARISH
(from the document AECQ « *Le tournant missionnaire des communautés chrétiennes* »)
(pages 17 – 19 – 22 – 24 – 27 – 29 - 32.)**

- 1- **A) What is a Christian community? How can the community be revitalized?**
(see Acts 2:2-12)
B) Currently, what is the face of our Christian community?
C) What advantages will be brought through working with teams of different ministries?

- 2- **Do we know the history of the Church in Quebec? (Where do we come from?)**
If so, do we make it known to others? How?
If not, what should we do to learn it and make it known to others?

- 3- **The Church was sent with a specific mission. Do we know it?**
If so, what do we do, as a Christian community, to be sure it is well-known and understood?
If not, what concrete means should be chosen and put into place to learn it and make it known?
- 4- **Do we “really” know the catechumenal steps that allow members of the Christian community to feel involved and be actively engaged?**
If so, how to concretely implement this?
If not, how can we learn about this procedure and apply it?
How do we support the parents and/or other people who are journeying through Christian initiation?
- 5- **Can we identify other pastoral areas to live the missionary shift?**
Once it is identified, how should we respond?
- 6- **Does our pastoral action rely on strong bonds, woven between people, or does it respond more to an administrative, bureaucratic or other type of structure?**
- 7- **What are the means that promote pastoral leadership of the laity?**
- 8- **How can our Christian community be a community that simultaneously celebrates, prays, transmits the faith, and is charitable?**
- 9- **9- How does one foster relationships that builds up the People of God?**
- 10- **Have we been given or given ourselves a pastoral vision and/or a short- or long-term “mission” or “evangelisation” project?**
If so, do we make it known? How? Do we readjust according to an annual assessment?
If not, what should we do?
Should collaborators be sought? Which ones? With whom?
- 11- **Within our community, are members conscious that they are authors and agents of the Church’s mission?**
What are the roles, functions, services, and other elements that must be provided by the laity?
What training should be provided to them to secure or adjust their competencies?
- 12- **The Word of God and the encounter with the poor are two royal ways in the missionary shift. How can we promote a deeper understanding and implementation of these two elevated ways?**

- 13- **How to open oneself to mentorship and spiritual accompaniment instead of experience and adequate training for the service of the parish's pastoral agents?**
- 14- **Do we currently give ourselves the necessary human resources for evangelisation? What are they? Do we recruit or verify the adequacy of these human resources for the services they fulfill?**
- 15- **15- Do we foresee a time of discernment that leads to a revision of the evangelical life of all the pastoral practices of our community as a whole?
In a synodal fashion?
With the intention of informing all members of the community of the progress and results of this discernment?
Trying to reach as many youth as possible?
AND, finally, take courageous decisions in order to make a true missionary shift?**
- 16- **Other...**
- 17-
- COMMENTS :**

III- (Suggestions) Committees for the Future in Parishes (CAP)

Definition : Instrument for a parish community that is attentive to its members, to people, and to announce the Gospel in the most pertinent manner.

The members : Men/women/different ages/different neighborhoods/different movements/different leaders/etc.

By having representatives on 3 different baptismal pillars of priest, prophet, and king, without forgetting the financial component.

The criteria: Capable of working as a team/ knows to be welcoming and attentive/ capable of respecting and understanding others' perspectives, of being reflective, self-expressed, capable of understanding the thoughts of others, able to distance one's personal issues and having a holistic approach, capable of making decisions, taking responsibility,etc.

- Able to acquire a vision of Church and its mission; capable of a pastoral vision; able to formulate what it means to be baptized.

Methods : Between 4-10 people; take a few months to form the committee; inform the parish community of the committee

Mandate : 3 years, renewable once

Number of meetings : to be determined according to the work load, but at least once every 6 weeks for updates

Purpose:

- To work towards measurable objectives, which avoids wishful thinking ;
 - Long term
 - Medium term
 - Short term

- Establish a plan :
 - Identify needs
 - Collect information
 - Satisfy / respond to diocesan demands
 - Find the tools to prioritize meeting the needs
 - Choose what is best
 - Plan for evaluations
 - Determine member responsibilities/roles
 - Provide a timeline for objectives and courses of action
 - Make it public for transparency

The underlying theology : see the Second Vatican Council, In Lumen Gentium, chapter IV « The Laity »

All the baptized are responsible/co-responsible in the mission of the Church.

All the baptized are equal and complementary with different charisms and talents in a spirit of service. Thus, they share this in the service of the other baptized and in the service of the world because, all together, they build the Kingdom of God.

Reflection prepared by Lise Brindle and Louise-Morin Thibault