

## **The Necessity of Evangelization (5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year B)**

### **1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23—All Things to All People**

<sup>16</sup> For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. *For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!* <sup>17</sup> For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. <sup>18</sup> What then is my reward? *Just this: that in my preaching I may make the gospel free of charge, not making full use of my right in the gospel.* <sup>19</sup> For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. [<sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law—though not being myself under the law—that I might win those under the law. <sup>21</sup> To those outside the law I became as one outside the law—not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ—that I might win those outside the law.] <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. *I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.* <sup>23</sup> *I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.* (1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23)

1. Gospel: preaching “good news” or “good message” (Greek *euangelion*) (1 Cor 6:16)
2. Necessity: not an option, but a “necessity” (Greek *anangkē*) (1 Cor 6:16)
3. Financial Assistance: Paul has a “right” to it; but does not use it (cf. 1 Cor 9:12-14).
4. Universal: Paul seeks to win both Jews and Gentiles (1 Cor 9:20-21)
5. Inculturation: Paul adapts himself; “all things to all men” (1 Cor 9:22)
6. Salvation: that I might “by all means save some” (1 Cor 9:23)

### **The Living Tradition**

Pope Francis: In all the baptized, from first to last, the sanctifying power of the Spirit is at work, *impelling us to evangelization... In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples* (cf. *Mt 28:19*). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. *The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love.* Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are “disciples” and “missionaries”, but rather that we are always “*missionary disciples*”. If we are not convinced, let us look at those first disciples, who, immediately after encountering the gaze of Jesus, went forth to proclaim him joyfully: “We have found the Messiah!” (*Jn 1:41*). The Samaritan woman became a missionary immediately after speaking with Jesus and many Samaritans come to believe in him

“because of the woman’s testimony” (*Jn* 4:39). So too, Saint Paul, after his encounter with Jesus Christ, “immediately proclaimed Jesus” (*Acts* 9:20; cf. 22:6-21). So what are we waiting for? (Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* no. 119-20)

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection (5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year B)

1. Is it really “necessary” for every Christian to be a witness to the “gospel”? How can we realize Pope Francis’ call for every baptized person to imitate Paul and become a “missionary disciple” (*Evangelii Gaudium* no. 120)

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### For Further Reading

1. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* (trans. F. R. Larcher, O.P.; eds. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón; Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2012).
2. Gerald Bray, ed. *1-2 Corinthians* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VI; Downers Grove, IL.: IVP, 1999).
3. George T. Montague, SM, *First Corinthians* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010).