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« The New Evangelization :
Speaking God to Multicultural Secularism »

« Religion is a fundamental part of culture, not as a dogma nor a belief, but as a cry. »
(Maurice Merleau-Ponty, French Philosopher, 1908-1961)

It's strange to refer to a word that appears in the title of this Conference « The New Evangelization-Multicultural and Inculturated » that doesn't even appear in a dictionary, neither in French nor in English. The word « inculturation » is a term used in Christianity, especially in the Roman Catholic Church, referring to the adaptation of the way Church teachings are presented to non-Christian cultures and to the influence of these cultures on the evolution of these teachings.
It's also quite odd to introduce my speech by referring to inculturation within the project of « the new evangelization » because we all know that this term is not intended as a priority for people of non-Christian cultures but very well for our own fellow Christians, in our own countries, in our own home towns. Many of them have deserted not only their Church but unfortunately all forms of religion. Others have very mixed feelings towards the Church and have strayed towards beliefs of their own making or have been attracted to other sects or faiths. Finally, and most worrying for the Church, many have not experienced a close and personal relationship with Christ, they have never had the « ... encounter with an event, a person which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction ... » as Pope Benedict XVI writes in Deus Caritas Est.

These are however our brothers and sisters to whom we must speak in a way that rekindles their faith in the Lord, in a language that not only they can understand but that will bring hope and meaning into their life because the Word of God will sound true. We don't have to travel to foreign countries to encounter different cultures any more. In our own cities and communities, our fellow citizens have changed their ways of living, of thinking, of believing. Culture doesn't refer to racial or social features, to whatever degree of education or interest in artistic, scientific or intellectual domains. The world we live in has changed dramatically. It has become a huge mosaic of mentalities, a kaleidoscope of ideas and beliefs. This is the new world, the new culture into which the Good News of the Lord must resound. Inculturation is the task we must accomplish to reconcile the world within the plan of God. And as our beloved Pope Francis says : « Christian life must always be restive and never act as a tranquillizer or even less as a terminal treatment to keep us quiet until we go to heaven. So like Saint Paul, we must witness “to the message of true reconciliation” without being overly concerned with statistics or proselytism...Christian peace impels us and this is the beginning, the root of apostolic zeal » (Homily at Mass on Saturday morning, June 15, 2013 in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae).

Thank God we don't start from scratch. We walk in the footsteps of many generations of disciples of Christ, from the Apostles, from zealous missionaries and saints such as Paul, and from millions of our brothers and sisters who have witnessed the love of God and shared their faith with all those with whom they lived in their time and age. They have passed down this wonderful gift of the love of God for this world, as a living testimony of the relevance of the presence of His Spirit in our Church, in our life such as it is today.

Spreading the Word of God in New France : an original process of inculturation. As they sailed down the Saint-Lawrence River after parting from their beloved France, the European settlers set their eyes on a country they had never dreamed of, so beautiful yet so strange. But what was their surprise to discover that this New World was also
inhabited with peoples that had been living there for thousands of years. So they settled as though they were in their own right and slowly discovered that they would have to deal and understand these Aboriginal peoples in order to live in peace and to accomplish a work of civilization and evangelization that they thought was their duty to accomplish. This was the beginning of a process of new evangelization within the context of inculturation in our homeland.

Not only did the explorers discover new territories and push back frontiers, a huge project of evangelization was also being put into place with the arrival of the Récollets in 1615, and the Jesuits some ten years later. These missionaries soon realized that they had landed in a different world. The Aboriginal peoples, as well as the Europeans who had ventured into this new country, needed to hear the Word of God in a way that suited their culture and responded to their needs. Bishop François de Laval soon set up a seminary in order to form priests and train them to respond to these expectations. I am proud to recall that the Séminaire de Québec was established 350 years ago in Québec City, on March 26, 1663. The anniversary was greeted with wide celebrations. Plans are now being made for another great event, that of the foundation of Notre-Dame de Québec Parish. The importance of this celebration is in part due to the fact that Notre-Dame de Québec, founded on September 15th 1664 by Bishop de Laval, is the «mother-parish» of all Catholic parishes of Canada and the United States. We all pray that this event will also be a way of igniting the faith in our people, as it is wished by our beloved Pope Francis.

Along with these priests, religious congregations of men and women daringly joined the effort of evangelization in the New World. One of the great women who helped to establish the Church in North America was the Ursuline nun Blessed Marie de l’Incarnation. Early in her life, she had heard the Lord's voice calling her and saying: «I want you to go to Canada and build a house to Jesus and Mary.» She answered: «I travel the world in spirit in order to find all the souls who have been saved by the most precious blood of Jesus, my Divine Spouse.» (Reference: Premonitory Dreams, Ursulines-uc.com).

Mother Marie de l'Incarnation soon set up a school that educated native as well as French girls. This audacious woman learned and mastered four aboriginal languages, composed the first dictionaries comparing French with aboriginal dialects and wrote instructive letters describing the life in the colony. Another great figure of that time, Mother Marie-Catherine de Saint-Augustin, with her Augustinian Hospital Sisters, took care of the sick and looked after the needy in the new Hôtel-Dieu they set up in the city. The work of charity and dedication of both Marie de l'Incarnation and Marie-Catherine de Saint-Augustin was so impressive and edifying that the Church has recently beatified them both. Their bodies, along with Blessed Bishop François de Laval, rest in our city of Québec consequently nicknamed «The City of Saints». 
In 1658, a mere fifty years after the foundation of Québec, the Apostolic Vicariate of New France was created. It became a diocese in 1674, headed by its first bishop, Monseigneur François de Laval, who had arrived in the colony in 1659. By 1712, this new diocese covered most of the territory of North America. Only the six British colonies of New England and the Spanish possessions of Florida, Mexico, California and Texas were not part of it. Had we been living in those times, I would have been the Archbishop of this city! Happily, times have changed!

What makes the work of all these men and women so innovative is that they will have gone to great pains to respond to the needs of bodies and souls in order to pave the way to a better understanding of the Word of the Lord. They learned the languages spoken by the indigenous peoples and made efforts to adapt the liturgy to make it more accessible to them. For example, the hymn « Jesus Ahatonnia » (Jesus is born), composed for the Hurons by the Jesuit priest Jean de Brébeuf, one of the eight North American martyrs, is still sung today in many of our churches on Christmas day in its French version. Their zeal to evangelize was accomplished in the spirit of inculturation as they felt they witnessed the Lord's promise that: « Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me » (Matthew 25:40). They overcame incredible obstacles in order to reach the peoples in remote territories, the « fringes », where they lived, to understand their customs and their beliefs. Their main goal was to unveil to them the greatness of the Love of God for all His children. Many of them underwent martyrdom in the most atrocious manner for this reason.

This process of inculturation continued for decades and flourished in a new environment after the French defeat and the passing of the colony to the British Empire, in 1763. This political change brought about the arrival of soldiers and peoples, mainly from England, Scotland and Germany, who were in most part Anglican and Protestant, therefore forging a new brand of cultural and religious environment, notwithstanding that the dominant language became English. Other sociological and political changes occurred in the following centuries, Québec being known as a land open to immigration and a beacon of liberty. Nevertheless, the Province remained French-speaking and Catholic, mostly as the result of a fascinating and dynamic process of evangelization within a context of inculturation pursued by our Church. These days however, our people don't prove the same determination regarding its faith and its religious culture. Our communities, like so many others in the Western World, have been overwhelmed with secularism and huge sociological changes. We must now admit that the need for a new evangelization has become imperative in the light of this prevailing culture. How can the Word of God, the Good News taught by Jesus, now be proclaimed in order that we all « put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth » (Ephesians 4:24)?
In what world must we proclaim today the Good News of Jesus Christ? «For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God » (Romans 8:19). Allow me to draw up a few figures to give you an oversight of our society in Québec today. The latest statistics taken from the Canadian census of 2011, although it was not compulsory for citizens to answer, reveal that in the Province of Québec, 75% of the total 8.4 million inhabitants declared themselves as Catholics. They had been 83% to do so in the previous obligatory census in 2001. If we look back at an earlier census, in 1991, 86% of the people had answered that they were Catholics. The figures show a steady decline in the number of citizens ready to declare themselves of this faith. This is a phenomenon that can be easily observed in the regular attendance at Sunday mass, in the request for sacraments, in the number of churches that are being closed, sold or demolished, in the scarcity of new candidates entering our seminaries and religious Orders. Only a few decades ago, Québec was a training-ground for young priests who flocked into rectories, parish schools and catholic organizations to answer to the call of their faithful duty. Hardly fifty years ago, Québec was a nursery for hundreds of missionaries, both men and women, who were sent all over the planet in order to proclaim the Word of God and serve as missionaries in sister Churches. I was one of those who happily experienced this missionary work when I spent nine years in Colombia, South America.

Statistics further reveal another aspect of our society, this one relating to age. As mentioned earlier, the total population of the Province is today a little more that 8 million people. However, the tendency is showing that our citizens are very rapidly getting older. The majority of the population ranks in the age-group of those who are 20 to 64 years old. Only 1.8 million people are less than 20 years old. Useless to describe the many problems that arise in social security and health systems, just to mention those. But for the Church and our proper ministry, this situation must be addressed very seriously. For we all know that every age group has a particular code of values made of ways of thinking, of relating to life. Each generation has its own culture. In consequence, how do we evangelize children, teenagers, boys and girls, the elders, men and women, citizens of recent immigration, in order to reach their hearts and minds? How do we become witnesses for those who see in our way of living an example for their own life, a decisive argument to turn towards Christ, in a manner described by Pope Paul VI: «Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses » (Address to the Members of the Consilium de Laicis, October 2, 1974)?

The world we live in is deeply secularised and hedonistic. We are well aware of the fact that secularism has crept into many domains of our daily life. Everyone can see how the media, notably, play a powerful role in forging public opinion in subjects that level any diverging ideas. What is written in the newspapers often becomes solemn truth. What the reporter on television is convinced of becomes the way of defining one's own opinion.
in order to be in style with what is commonly admitted as proper to think and to do. It is sad to see how so many people deny the fact that God may be relevant in this day and age. Such an attitude leads unfortunately to cultural ignorance and laxity in moral and spiritual values. Therefore, it becomes more and more difficult to connect our fellow citizens to Jesus and to help them walk into the paths He invites us to follow so that we may live according to his Word. This is the land where new ideas are germinating and challenging our moral beliefs and ethical values. John Paul II, reminded us in his letter for the third millennium that this is the land in which «...we must rekindle in ourselves the impetus of the beginnings... This should be done however with the respect due to the different paths of different people and with the sensitivity to the diversity of cultures in which the Christian message must be planted, in such a way that particular values of each people will not be rejected but purified and brought to their fullness » (John Paul II, Apostolic Letter Novo Millenio Ineunte, January 6, 2001, No 40).

We recall the missionary mandate that Jesus left us : « Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature » (Mark 16:15). « It is necessary, then, to keep a watchful eye on this our world, with its problems and values, its unrests and hopes, its defeats and triumphs...This, then, is the vineyard; this is the field in which the faithful are called to fulfill this mission » (Blessed John-Paul II, Christifideles Laici, and N° 3 al 6).

Although the term « new evangelization » now seems to be widespread, at least in the vocabulary of the Church, we owe the true meaning of the expression and its main objectives to Blessed Pope John-Paul II. Not only did he define the terminology but he made it an objective to be pursued throughout Christendom. Most enlightening for the understanding of his teaching is chapter 34 of his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Christifideles Laici. It is a jewel of perfection regarding what is expected in order to bring this project to a successful end. I know of no finer words to describe what we are expected to achieve regarding new evangelization : « Without doubt a mending of the Christian fabric of society is urgently needed in all parts of the world. But for this to come about, what is needed is to first remake the Christian fabric of the ecclesiastical community itself present in these countries and nations...This vital synthesis will be achieved when the lay faithful know how to put the Gospel and their duties of life into a shining and convincing testimony, where the loving pursuit of Christ and adherence to him will be the factors determining how a person is to live and grow, and these will lead to new ways of living more in conformity with human dignity. »

His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI carried on this project, last October, when he convened the Synod of Bishops on New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith. I was truly blessed to be part of this gathering, along with some 400 cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests, lay men and women as well as experts from all over the world. Together, we shared our views, our hopes, and our experiences. We
sought to bring about recommendations in words that would speak directly to the hearts and minds of people in our modern, globalized and secular societies.

The Synod reminded us how important it has become to rely on new technologies people are familiar with, such as modern lines of communications, marketing and the media. The Synod Fathers emphasized the importance of a high quality spiritual life in order to succeed in evangelizing as best and solidly as possible. They recalled the importance of the laity and the high value of their particular ministry in the Church, as these brothers and sisters are true witnesses of the hope, the love and the joy that result from living in Christ. Furthermore, the Synod Fathers underlined the importance of parishes as the birthplace of the true faith, for the nurturing of community life in solidarity and love. They recalled the importance of priesthood and the necessity for us to form cohorts of well trained ministers.

Proposition 50 speaks highly of communities of consecrated life: «The Consecrated life, of both men and women, has made a very important contribution to the Church’s work of evangelization throughout history. In this moment of new evangelization, the Synod asks all men and women, religious and members of secular institutes, to live their identity as consecrated persons radically and with joy. The witness of a life which manifests the primacy of God and which, by means of the common life, expresses the humanizing force of the Gospel is a powerful proclamation of the Reign of God. Consecrated life, fully evangelical and evangelizing, in profound communion with the pastors of the Church and in co-responsibility with the laity, faithful to the respective charisms, will offer a significant contribution to the New Evangelization. The Synod asks Religious Orders and Congregations to be fully available to go to the geographical, social and cultural frontiers of evangelization. The Synod invites religious to move toward the new aeropaghi of mission ».

Many of these objectives have become guidelines for our work of new evangelization in the Diocese of Québec, and we have been making progress in complying with them.

I pray tribute to my two immediate predecessors, Archbishop Maurice Couture and Cardinal Marc Ouellet, for having in their time appraised the situation in our Diocese and our parish communities. They drafted helpful guidelines for the years to come, those in which we have now arrived. So I am carrying on with this work together with pastoral associates, the clergy, dedicated lay faithful and many religious and groups who agree, wholeheartedly, to assume responsibilities in different fields. Only last year, for example, we held over one hundred meetings with parishioners in order to hear their opinions, to understand their needs and to set up the best ways of responding with the resources we have at our disposal. This huge process of spiritual discernment has now led to a regrouping of parishes known as «Communion of communities ». The work is
progressing well under the slogan « Together for the Mission » with results that happily bear fruit. We focus on the need for new evangelization of our society, bearing in mind that this can only be achieved if we all comply with a process of conversion in our own hearts. We also strive to adapt our ways of spreading the faith in order to experience, for ourselves and for our brothers and sisters, a close and personal encounter with Christ.

Useless to describe certain obstacles that may arise from the fact that such a process of conversion often clashes with the cultural differences I mentioned earlier. Some will say, even within our own communities, that we go too far, too fast. On the other hand, some consider that the Church isn't audacious enough. Nevertheless, I feel our Church is marching on towards a better way of becoming more faithful to the Gospel and better missionaries.

One very big step that is truly helping our Diocese to face the challenges of new evangelization is the place that we have given to the Word of God in our daily lives. Hundreds of small groups that share the Gospel in their homes, in their apostolic groups as they begin the meetings of parish councils, meetings of priests, are blossoming all over the Diocese. I find that sharing the Gospel has brought us closer to one another, has renewed our apostolic zeal and helps us embrace the missionary mandate entrusted to us by the Lord. I don’t know how it is in the region where you live, but in Québec, I find that we have a very long road to travel before Catholics decide seriously to open their hearts to the Living Word of God. But I do think we are on the right track and those who are beginning to share the Gospel are fascinated with the Good News they are discovering.

It is one thing to know about Jesus, to recall some of the stories you learned when you were young at catechism classes and it is something very different to encounter Jesus in the Gospel as Good News for your life today.

To undertake this new mission, we are fortunate enough to count on thousands of devoted people and numerous organizations whose work breathes a new life into our communities. I often refer to them as being driven by a GPS, not as you may think a Global Positioning System, but the Great Prophetic Spirit who guides us towards Jesus Christ, as written by the Prophet Ezekiel: « I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my ways » (Ezekiel 36: 26-27). They are the ones who devote themselves in one or another of the 216 pastoral Movements and Services which are listed in our Diocesan Directory of 2013. They are the 700 priests in our diocesan clergy and members of religious Orders; the 93 permanent deacons; the 100 or so men and women who are properly mandated as pastoral agents; the members of 22 religious Orders and Institutes of consecrated life for men and 35 for women, for a total of close to two thousand consecrated men and women. These numbers demonstrate how much the Spirit of the Lord is at work in our Diocese, as well as in our Catholic Church and in our world. I take
comfort in the promise that: « Behold, I am with you always, until the end of age » (Matthew 28:20). Although most of our consecrated men and women are aging, some of the older communities are receiving young vocations and we are also seeing new communities arise and become very active in the Church. Most of these new groups are very much involved in new evangelization.

There are many reasons to rejoice and to hope that our Church will bravely undertake this mission of speaking God to a multicultural and secular world. One of these is the impetuousness of our youth. They are hundreds to witness their faith in Christ among their peers in words and gestures that ring true and clear in their particular culture. Only a few days ago, some 110 young people from our Diocese attended the World Youth Days in Rio de Janeiro. With hundreds of thousands of young men and women from some 190 countries, assembled around Pope Francis as the Good Shepherd gathering his flock, they praised the Lord in their joyful fashion. They prayed for the world and prepared their hearts to share their faith, their hope and their enthusiasm. They stirred up their energy to help build a Church they are proud to live in and that will be attractive to men and women of these times.

Hundreds of other boys and girls, adolescents and young adults, have joined up in some of the Youth movements that are active in the Diocese. They have committed themselves to follow the path that will lead, some to baptism, others to confirmation and to the Eucharist. Others are involved in their schools, parishes or local youth movements where they deepen their faith and dare speak of God in terms that sound true to their peers. They are real missionaries of a new evangelization in a world where generations belonging to a different culture need to hear such Good News.

No model of inculturation is more sublime than the Incarnation of the Word. « Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in human likeness and in human appearance he humbled himself becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross » (Philippians 2:6-8).

When entering our world, the Son of God not only was made man among men. By giving up his life for us on the cross and rising from the dead, He redeemed us and made us his People. Our response to this gift of love is to have faith in his Word and to believe that He is truly « ...the way and the truth and the life » (John 14:6). As we approach the end of this Year of the Faith, it is good news to hear our beloved Pope Francis outline the relevance of faith in our world: « 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 » (Encyclical Letter Lumen Fidei, 2013, N° 4).

If to « evangelize » is to transmit the hope, the love and the grace of salvation by Jesus Christ to every human being, there is no better model to follow than the Lord Jesus
himself. Hence the importance of being able to answer his question: «But who do you say I am?» (Luke 9:8-24). No other form of evangelization can be more perfectly fit to our life than this personal relationship to Christ. «For through faith you are all children of God in Jesus Christ. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ... you are all one in Jesus Christ» (Galatians 3:26-28). It is therefore most important to convert oneself to the love of Christ if we are to pursue this mission, even more if we are to evangelize those of our brothers and sisters who stand on the threshold of a faith that bears little relevance in their life. As Blessed John-Paul II reminded us: «Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves. They must proclaim him» (John Paul II, Novo Milenio Ineunte, N° 40).

Israel, the land where Jesus of Nazareth was born, lies at the crossroads of many civilizations. Remember the enumeration of peoples to whom Peter addressed his speech on the morning of Pentecost: «Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem» (Acts 2:5). Undoubtedly, Jesus frequently met women and men who lived differently and had beliefs that were foreign to his own religion, to his native language and to his particular cultural background. The Gospels depict many of his encounters with some of these people: Romans, Samaritans, Canaanites and others. Within his own homeland: Pharisees and scribes, kings and high priests, men and women of all trades and conditions. His attitude towards them is unanimously respectful of their human dignity albeit he doesn't always approve of their ideas nor their deeds. His teaching is never doctrinaire nor magisterial. He prefers to speak in parables to convey his ideas, never to impose them. He rather lets his listeners find the answer to his Words that will lead them to a conversion of their heart. The way Our Lord chose to evangelize in the multicultural context of his country is in many ways still relevant in ours, today. A fine example lies in the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well near the town of Sychar (cf. John 4: 5-42).

The meeting takes place in Samaria. It is known that the Jews have nothing in common with Samaritans, in fact they despise them. The person drawing water from the well is a woman. Moreover, she is a sinner since she lives with another man out of wedlock. She doesn't either seem to practice any form of religion. The meeting appears most unusual as the disciples themselves seem «amazed to find him talking to a woman». However, the manner in which the Lord leads the conversation gives us a mighty lesson about evangelizing within a context of inculturation.

First he greets the woman with respect and engages her in conversation with a subject relating to a chore of her daily life, showing how precious a gift is the water she is about to draw to quench his thirst. About her marital life, Jesus receives her explanations as true. Then he respectfully adds a few questions until she reveals that she is in fact living with a man that isn't her husband. As to her lack of religious practice, since the
The temple built on Mount Garizim had long been destroyed, Jesus doesn't hold it against her. He rather takes advantage of the fact to reveal the true nature of adoration to which she, and all mankind from then onwards, will be conveyed: «The hour is coming and is now here when worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth» (John 4:23). The impact of the encounter is such that Jesus is invited by the Samaritans to stay with them for two more days and the result is that «Many more began to believe in him because of his word» (John 4:41).

The Lord succeeds in dismissing all forms of social prejudice, of religious and sexual preconceptions. He respects the dignity of the Samaritan woman and shows consideration for her culture and her openness to his discourse. He sympathizes with her suffering. He forgives her failures after she has agreed to admit living in a state of adultery. He is patient, yet straightforward, in his language in bringing about the truth in her life. He is compassionate and understanding; he has touched her heart.

I have always admired how Jesus can always speak the truth in love and love in truth. Love and truth are made to go together, it’s a perfect marriage! There should never be any divorce between these two very important realities of Christian living. I truly believe we need to learn from Jesus how to better conjugate these two words together: truth and love. We are sometimes tempted to mellow down the truth as not to hurt anyone. Other times, we are willing to tell someone all the truth, but without love. In both situations, we are not faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He shows us we can love and live in the truth at all times. It can be done if we follow his example. The French Philosopher, Jacques Maritain once said: «Truth without love is too hard to take. Love without truth is too soft!»

We are so used to low calorie, low carbohydrate foods, that we have gotten into the habit of low calorie Christian living. That takes all the vitamins, the energy and the radicality out of it. No wonder so many people look at us and think our life is boring and senseless. We may be too watered down disciples of Jesus Christ and lost much of our Christian flavor!

Getting back to the page of John’s Gospel, Jesus’ attitude and way of entering into a relationship led to the conversion of the Samaritan woman and of her compatriots. The narration further shows how the Lord brought light into the life of whoever was open to hear his Word. This is exactly the manner Pope Francis teaches us how to evangelize. «Our people like to hear the Gospel preached with «unction». They like it when the Gospel we preach touches their daily lives... when it brings lights to moments of extreme darkness, to the « outskirts » where people of faith are most exposed on the onslaught of those who want to tear down the faith... We need to «go out» then, to the « outskirts » where there is suffering, bloodshed, blindness that longs for sight and prisoners in thrall to many evil masters...This I ask you: be shepherds... make it real as shepherds among
your flock, fishers of men... until the nets which overflow with fish are those cast solely in the name of the One in whom we have put our trust: Jesus. » (Homily of Pope Francis, Chrism Mass, Rome, 28 March 2013).

The Lord's Prayer. « I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also be in us... » (John 17:19-20).

The Lord's prayer is a perfect act of « inculturation » considering that the dialogue thus established with his Father is the highest degree possible of an entwined understanding and loving of their individual Self, as written in John: «... that I am in the Father and the Father in me. » (14:11). Jesus draws from this intense interpersonal relationship with his Father the love he then shares with mankind, the stamina needed to spread his message despite the lack of understanding of those who boast their wisdom with pride and refuse to open their hearts plagued with prejudice. In prayer he finds comfort after suffering from the treachery of friends and the betrayal of one of his own disciples. In prayer he asks the Father to grant him the courage to obey His will at all times, all the way to the cross. He prays the Father to bestow on him the power to heal human misery and illness. He implores Him to fill his heart with the compassion he will need to listen, to understand and to love all those who need him, who clutch to his robes, in order that « The works that the Father gave me to accomplish, these works I perform to testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me » (John 5:36).

When the disciples, filled with awe by his filial devotion, asked him how to pray, the Lord Jesus taught them to say « Our Father ». This prayer is now ours to recite with the same gratitude, the same fervor and the same humility as was that of Our Lord. Prayer is just as imperative for us now as it had been for Jesus.

Prayer will give us the strength and the courage to embark on the heavy seas of the world we live in, despite the fact we find it hazardous, feverous and rough. Despite the high winds, the Lord summons us to « cast the nets ». Prayer will stir up our faith and enlighten our hope that, with the help of the Spirit, we may never surrender to despair but always rely on his grace to help our brothers and sisters find happiness and a true meaning to their life in the message of Christ. Prayer will brighten and support our missionary work. It will guide us towards the fringes of the Church where our brothers and sisters await to hear words that ring true and help them regain the fervor of their faith. It will lead us to the fringes of society where our fellow citizens long for truth, hope and happiness, where they will only find a satisfying answer in a message that they understand and that gives meaning to their life. We will find the courage to go to the fringes of the world and obey the last will of our Lord: « Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit » (Matthew 28:19).
The Church needs the dedication and the participation of all its members for new evangelization to happen in our multicultural and secularised world. And it needs to happen now. We’ve done enough talking, reflecting and strategic studies. It’s time we become even more committed in our daily lives to sharing our faith through witness, through our actions and words. We have nothing to impose to anyone, whether they be Catholics, Christians, Jews, Muslims, of other faiths or without faith. But we have someone wonderful to present to our brothers and sisters, someone who can change their lives and give them abundant life and eternal life: Jesus Christ.

You, members of communities of consecrated life, religious men, who belong to a great variety of Orders, are key players in this great mission. The charisms and mission of your communities are a gift to the Church to better accomplish its mission in the midst of the world. May the Lord give you the perseverance and the courage to continue responding with generosity and faithfulness to your call to holiness.

I would like to close with these words from the first encyclical of Pope Francis, Lumen Fidei: «If truth is a truth of love, if it is a truth disclosed in personal encounter with the Other and with others, then it can be set free from its enclosure in individuals and become part of the common good. As a truth of love, it is not one that can be imposed by force; it is not a truth that stifles the individual. Since it is born of love, it can penetrate to the heart, to the personal core of each man and woman. Clearly, then, faith is not intransigent, but grows in respectful coexistence with others. Far from making us inflexible, the security of faith sets us on a journey; it enables witness and dialogue with all» (Pope Francis, Lumen Fidei, No 34).

Thank you very much for inviting me to share these thoughts with you.