

# A MANDATE FOR THE KINGDOM: MISSION AND EVANGELIZATION IN THE CARIBBEAN

A Pastoral Letter from the  
Bishops of the Antilles  
Episcopal Conference

January 9, 2018



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## **Pastoral Letter of the Antilles Episcopal Conference**

To our beloved brothers and sisters in Christ in the Antilles and all people of goodwill:

We, the Bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference, constantly thank God for you in our prayers and greet you in the name of Jesus Christ, who reveals to the world the mercy and compassion of God, and who we proclaim Saviour and Liberator of the world.

### **PREFACE**

1. The Church's mission of evangelization proclaims Jesus Christ, who is the Good News, to the world. This Good News or Gospel is the divine revelation of God that breaks into history (Matthew 4:23; 9:35). The Gospel of Jesus Christ, his words and actions, is, therefore, the basis of the Church's mission of evangelization. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5-7 and Luke 6:20-4) and the parables, for example, unveil the Good News of Jesus or the reign of God in the world. On the other hand, Jesus' actions such as the miracles, the exorcisms and the healings point to the meaning of the Kingdom or Reign of God that brings new life for everyone.
2. As narrated in the post-Resurrection story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), the consequence of Jesus' proclamation of the Good News is an encounter with Jesus Christ, a conversion of mind and heart, becoming disciples of Jesus Christ, participation in community life, and mission. The Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean reiterate this basic point, "Those who felt attracted by the wisdom of his words, the kindness of his manner, the power of his miracles, and the stunning impact of his person, accepted the gift of faith and went on to be disciples of Jesus" (*Aparecida*, 21). Furthermore, "As they get to know and love their Lord, disciples experience the need to share with others the joy at being sent." (*Aparecida*, 278, e).

3. As recorded in the Christian Scriptures, this profound encounter with the Person of Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, transforms individuals and sends them on mission. The witness of the Apostles and the countless believers throughout the centuries who heard and received the person of Jesus Christ are testimony to the power of the Good News of Jesus Christ. With lives grounded in Gospel values, these witnesses have contributed tremendously to the transformation of people's lives and cultures, built societies and formed civilizations in Asia Minor, the Middle East, Western and Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. In the Caribbean, for example, we remember countless missionaries who worked with the marginalized and poor such as **Bartolome de la Casas** who defended the indigenous Indians in the Dominican Republic, **Petrus Donders** who cared for the marginalized lepers in Suriname and the Servant of God, Archbishop **Anthony Pantin** of the Archdiocese of Port of Spain.
4. The Second Vatican Council taught that the Church's mission of evangelization has its source in the evangelical mission of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and that the Church is by its very nature "missionary" (*Ad Gentes*, 2). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is sent as God in human flesh in order to bring about peace and communion among men and women. Consequently, the mission of the Church is to continue the mission of Jesus Christ. Active in the world, the Holy Spirit is the source of charisms and gifts in the Church, brings together believers into communion, and inspires the hearts of the faithful with that "same spirit of mission which impelled Christ himself" (*Ad Gentes*, 4). In a word, the genuine image of the mission of the Church is seed sowing (Luke 8:4-15), that is, to sow the Word of God in the soil of the various peoples so that it might germinate there and develop even as it transforms that soil (*Ad Gentes*, 22).
5. Twenty-five years ago in our Pastoral Letter: "**Evangelization for a New Caribbean**", we undertook to reflect on the meaning of evangelization and the consequent mission in our Caribbean context. In this Pastoral Letter, "**A Mandate for the Kingdom: Mission and Evangelization in the Caribbean**", we wish to deepen our reflection so as to keep pace with the evolving Caribbean culture, the soil of evangelization. We call upon you to be part of this great enterprise by becoming active missionary disciples.

## **PURPOSE, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

6. The teachings of the Second Vatican Council remind the Church of its fundamental mission of proclaiming to the world the Joy of the Gospel. In the spirit of Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (Joy of the Gospel, 1), the overall purpose of this Pastoral Letter is to inspire the Caribbean Church to embark upon a New Evangelization marked by joy, that is, proclaiming and living the Gospel of Jesus Christ within the Caribbean culture with enthusiasm and vitality.
7. Our goal, consequently, in this Pastoral Letter is to shed more light on Caribbean culture, raise some pertinent questions for reflection, and suggest some practical and creative ways of deepening our missionary and evangelization commitment today. Ultimately it is a call to all Catholics to be engaged in the life and mission of the Church.

## **CURRENT CONTEXTUAL REALITY AND QUESTIONS**

8. In our Pastoral Letter of 1992, we attempted to identify some issues of the new world scene. We mentioned then that “the quest of the individual for his or her roots results in an identity crisis which has its origin in history.” (Evangelization for New Caribbean, 8.1) At that time we also highlighted other issues, such as, social injustice and corruption, increasing poverty, widening gap between poor and rich, mesmerizing materialism and cloying consumerism, unequal distribution of the riches of creation and the cultural domination through the mass media, substance abuse and HIV/AIDS, devaluation of sex/sexuality, loss of the sense of the sanctity of life, unwholesome male-female relationships, irresponsible parenting, crippling international debts, violence. (cf. Evangelization for New Caribbean, 8.1) After twenty-five years, many aspects of Caribbean culture have remained the same. However, we can add to our list the effects of migration, human trafficking, gender identity issues and same-sex unions.
9. While to a large degree these socio-cultural issues remain the same, we believe that the way of understanding, perceiving and addressing them has evolved. First, we notice an increasing politicization and polarization around single issues, with twisting of religious ideologies to serve the agenda of a particular group. Often the objective of the

advocacy groups is to establish control and power over governments and the mind of the people, disregarding the range and complexity of the issues involved. Their methodological approach is transfixed on one aspect of the whole with the refusal to recognize or defend other pertinent aspects of the issue. For example, often we hear from lobby groups that are willing to defend one aspect of human life, such as opposing abortion, but refuse to pay attention to other aspects such as capital punishment or degrading poverty.

10. Second, we are witnessing an increased imposition of external cultural ideologies. The current method is to use economic sanctions or privileges to force the imposition of new legislation on local parliaments in order to replace existing laws with ones which are contrary to the values of the host country. This method of coercion is effective because Government Policy informs legislation, what government legalizes it encourages and what government encourages becomes culture. Some examples of this trend are:

- United Kingdom's Prime Minister David Cameron at the October 2011 Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Australia threatening countries that ban homosexuality with losing aid payments if they do not conform;
- The United States government in December 2011 issued a memorandum entitled "International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Persons" that directed US government agencies to support the gay agenda when working with foreign governments and organizations. USAID has taken up this initiative;
- The Organization of American States (O.A.S.) held a meeting in Guatemala in 2013 that sought to bind member States to a revised document on the 'Inter-American Convention Against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance' which placed gender ideologies under the umbrella of Human Rights. Regrettably only Barbados, Jamaica, Suriname, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Belize did not sign and so the document was ratified. Pope Francis calls gender theory a 'global war' against the family.

Any discussion therefore on Evangelization in the Caribbean must take these current issues into consideration.

11. Third, there is a misuse of the model of unity. We see some associations or groups enter into partnerships in order to pursue a single issue or agenda so as to destroy or marginalize others. For example, there are lobby groups that are transfixed on fighting one issue such as abortion but have no pastoral response for victims of abortion or concrete alternatives for women considering abortion. Hence, their aggressive approach to advocacy tends to alienate or condemn the human victims who are at the heart of the moral issue. In other words, this approach lacks mercy and compassion.
12. Fourth, the religious landscape throughout the Caribbean is changing. There is an increase in agnosticism, atheism, and growing secularisation; there is a rising percentage of our population who claim non-allegiance to any religious group; there is the decreasing membership in the traditional mainline churches, a growing Christian evangelicalism and a new wave of missionary groups from North and South America who see the Caribbean as a fertile ground for “evangelization”. Often times, these groups promote the “Gospel of Prosperity” which claims that material wealth is the consequence of giving your life to Jesus and a sign of God’s blessing. Non-Christian Religions are a significant part of the Region’s landscape but are too often ignored. Islam is a small but growing minority in several countries in the Region, which are mostly Christian (See Appendix 1). Afro-Christian Religions continue to be present and add vitality to the cultural space, as do Rastafari in Jamaica, Spiritual Baptist in Trinidad and Tobago and Winti-religion of Suriname.
13. Fifth, related to the issue of polarization, there is growing indifference to human suffering, especially towards individuals who are external to one’s own ethnic, ideological, political, or social group. This results in the further marginalization of individuals from society, church and family. For example, many citizens have become emotionally numb and apathetic towards the elderly and in seeing violence towards humans, animals and the environment.

14. This current Caribbean contextual reality evokes pertinent questions for evangelization. In order to put forward our mission in the context of Caribbean society, it is important that we reflect on the nature of our culture and how our history has shaped the current culture.

Some of these questions are:

- a. How do we understand evangelization in a politicized and polarized context?
- b. What demands does this place on us for the future?
- c. How does the Church reach out to the weak and vulnerable in our societies who have been marginalized by this new approach and indifference?
- d. How does the call for a new evangelization enable us to take a more holistic approach to the transformation of both society and individuals?
- e. How do we bring together and celebrate the culture-building of our ancestors that has created Caribbean values and structures which have sustained and enriched us over the years?

## **CARIBBEAN CULTURAL REALITY: FORMATION OF A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY**

15. Our Caribbean culture is the product of an encounter between indigenous populations and Europeans in their colonizing movement (an encounter that for the most part was violent and dehumanizing for the indigenous populations), and the movement of Africans as slaves, Chinese, Portuguese and Indians as indentured labourers. Hence, the region is characterized by the varied languages and cultures first of the original peoples then of the colonizers (English, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese and French) and the many local languages that subsequently developed from the introduction of enslaved persons mainly from Africa and, later, indentured servants primarily from Asia. Still later, traders and other immigrants mainly from the Far and Middle East added their

part to the complexity of the region's culture and there is the more recent influence of North America.

16. The social, cultural, and religious beliefs and practices that all of these ethnic groups brought with them have persisted over the years in spite of the “Christianizing/civilizing” efforts of the colonial masters. The result has been the development of a distinctive plural society with the usual tensions associated with the differences of class, race, colour, sex, culture and religion that make the search for a common Caribbean identity an ever-elusive reality and Caribbean integration a continued challenge (cf. Lowe Ching, 2009, p.30–42). As the late Professor Rex Nettleford writes, “An apt description of the typical Caribbean person is that he or she is part-African, part-European, part-Asian, part-Native American but totally Caribbean. To perceive this is to understand creative diversity in shaping our cultural identity . . .” (Nettleford, 2003, p. xi-xii).
  
17. This is the contextual reality within which the Caribbean Church is mandated to fulfil its mission of evangelization in the twenty-first century. For multiculturalism is, indeed, a significant contemporary issue that speaks directly to the necessity of seeking truth as it is revealed, though always partially, in particular contexts but always in relationship to the global reality. It is important for us, therefore, to clarify what “Catholic Culture” and “identity” actually entail at this time of our history, in view of the competing values presently operative in the lived experience of our peoples in this our multicultural reality. Here, we wish to affirm the insight of Archbishop Jason Gordon who states that today more than ever, “We need a Catholic Culture that is both missionary and open to the Incarnation as the dynamic principle of redemption; a Catholicism that sees the human culture as open to grace that works from within” (Gordon, p. 8f.). Thus the human person has the capacity to experience the life of grace working within while realizing the need for ongoing conversion as we seek to surrender our life to the will of God in all things. From this core Catholic cultural foundation, the Church carries out its missionary mandate, teaches its members, and builds its institutions, and thus becomes a sacrament for the Kingdom of God.



## TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE VISION

18. We maintain that given our past colonial experience and the lasting negative effects that this has had on the peoples of the Caribbean Region, it is not surprising that the liberal quest for freedom from all oppression will position the Region in a post-colonial experience. It is from that post-colonial viewpoint that we engage with issues that impact on human life and culture at all levels and in all areas. Hence, certain aspects, values and aspirations of this post-modern world will undoubtedly resonate with the experiences of Caribbean peoples and should be taken into account. Indeed, many of the positive values promoted by this alternative vision, such as inclusivity, unity in diversity, community, creativity, flexibility, interpersonal relationships and networking along with metaphors, symbols, stories, imagination and feelings are now being recognized as aspects of the cultural legacy of our indigenous peoples and natives of colonized nations.
19. Some of the negative aspects of modernity that Caribbean peoples have experienced are alienation, marginalization, dominance of scientific rationality, mono-cultural imposition, and the increasing gap between the rich and poor. As a consequence, Caribbean people, like other peoples elsewhere in the world, endorse the alternative life-giving vision of the present post-modern worldview while still being conscious of its negative aspects.

## THE CHALLENGE: MISSION AND EVANGELIZATION IN THE CARIBBEAN

20. The mission of evangelization is a process that attempts to engage the Word of God in the concrete reality of the Caribbean today. It is our belief that the Church's understanding of human development ought to be used as a framework for the evangelical mission of Jesus Christ in the Caribbean. This framework can offer a framework for making the lives of our people manifest the glory of God. In this regard, Pope Paul VI in his Encyclical, *Populorum Progressio* (PP), On the Development of Peoples, 1967, defines integral human development as ***the development of all people, every person and every dimension of the human person***. In the words of Archbishop Jason Gordon, "He gave us a continuum of development from less human to most human" (Pastoral

Letter “Lord Increase our Faith” p. 21). Given the Caribbean’s historical context of dehumanization and oppression, it is important that the Word of God and the Eucharist play a vital role in the Evangelization of the Family, Social Structures and Education. As pastors, we believe that this missionary engagement requires particular attention to the following aspects of ecclesial and socio-cultural reality - the Word of God, Eucharist, Evangelization of the Family and Evangelization of the Social Structures. We wish to note here that our efforts in this regard will be tremendously enhanced if we are attentive to training and retraining at all levels so that as Church our people are equipped to participate effectively in the mission of evangelization.

21. Following the teaching of the Magisterium it is important that pastors do not forget that Education is considered to be an essential part of the Evangelizing effort of the Church. The aim of Catholic education is the preparing of women and men to be good citizens of the world and good citizens of the Kingdom which is already in our midst. (Lk. 17:21) Through the teaching of secular subjects, Catholic schools strive to bring students to an appreciation and acceptance of Kingdom values and to a commitment to the New Life of Justice, Peace and Love for which Christ gave his life. Inherent in this enterprise is the promoting of structures (patterns of relationship) which foster and build Kingdom habits. It is important therefore that pastors recognize and affirm their autonomy to prepare teachers for their schools, remembering the words of Pope Paul VI that, "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* (2 October 1974): AAS 66 (1974), p. 568.] “.... such teachers must be outstanding in true doctrine and uprightness of life.” (c. 803, §2)

### **The Word of God:**

22. St. Paul, writing in his Second Letter to Timothy, says: “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction and for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim 3:16) Thus the Word of God enlightens and nourishes the Church’s liturgy, teaching, and pastoral life. In preserving and transmitting the scriptures through the centuries, the Church makes them come alive in every culture, thus

building up a rich tradition on which the Church's faith and mission of evangelization rely.

23. Today, the Caribbean Church is called to remain faithful to the Word of God revealed in the scriptures and the Caribbean Church's rich Tradition in the mission of evangelization. Through the scriptures and the Tradition, we encounter Jesus Christ who inspires us to build the Kingdom of God wherever the Church is planted. As Pope Francis exhorts us, "Jesus can also break through the dull categories with which we would enclose him and he constantly amazes us by his divine creativity. Whenever we make the effort to return to the source and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today's world. Every form of authentic evangelization is always 'new' (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 11).
24. Through *Lectio Divina* (reading with the scriptures), Biblical Animation of all Pastoral life, Bible study, among others, the Church intensifies its knowledge of and encounter with Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the Scriptures provide the Church with effective Gospel values, powerful to transform individuals, families, parishes, and societies. Pope Francis reminds us of this when he says, "God's Word is unpredictable in its power. The Gospel speaks of a seed which, once sown, grows by itself, even as the farmer sleeps (Mk 4:26-29). The Church has to accept this unruly freedom of the Word, which accomplishes what it wills in ways that surpass our calculations and ways of thinking" (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 22). To this end, the Church must invest in ministries related to the study, reflection and application of the Word of God. This is even more so relevant because we live in a Region in which our culture values the reading of the Sacred Scriptures.

### **Eucharist/Liturgy:**

25. The centrality of the Eucharist as a celebration of the redemption accomplished and revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ brings into sharp focus the use of symbols to indicate the reality of God's unconditional, self-giving love and the abiding presence of the Spirit in human life. The Eucharist then, as sacrament, enables Catholics

to encounter the mystery of God's real presence and, as symbol, evokes the continual unveiling of the reality of the transcendent God who is always beyond the full grasp of human beings.

26. This opening up to mystery is another direct link to the post-modern recognition of the mysteries of the universe that demand constant exploration in the search for meaning and a fuller human existence. Caribbean peoples, experiencing so much as beyond their control, are familiar with the mysteries of the human existence and search for meaning in tangible and symbolic contact with the spirit world beyond. This is manifested in the lively and emotionally laden participation in prolonged Eucharistic celebrations that is often the preferred mode of celebration for many (Austin-Broos, 1998).

27. There are further aspects of post-modern sensibilities that could enhance our present liturgical practices and point the way to more meaningful and effective expressions in the present Caribbean context. The following are some aspects we suggest:

- a. The need for unity in diversity particularly in recognizing and stressing inclusivity in our plural Caribbean society endowed with a multiplicity of races, cultures and social experiences, yet bonded together by a common colonial experience;
- b. The use of appropriate cultural images and symbols that resonate in the unconscious depths of Caribbean peoples and are capable of evoking more genuine responses than those arrived at through rational understanding and judgment alone;
- c. The inclusion of bodily gestures and other ways of expressing feelings in worship to complement while not replacing the reasoned expressions of the Christian life of faith in liturgical services;
- d. The search for inner meaning and spiritual experiences that reach down to the contemplative depth of human existence and foster the appropriate use of silence and "sacred space" as avenues to experiencing the living God in the midst of the exaggerated noise that often bombards Caribbean societies.

28. It is most important to understand, however, that lived faith experience grounded in personal encounter with the Incarnate Word of God, and revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, must be the driving force undergirding the Christian Community. “It is only from this perspective of faith”, as Archbishop Gordon asserts, “that we can adequately understand the Mystery that we contemplate. It is only from contemplating the Mystery that we can adequately come to a living faith” (Archbishop Gordon, *Groundings*, 2013, no. 29, p. 9).
29. This faith must, therefore, become evident in a way of life in which the grace of God is actively at work, drawing all inclusively into communion with one another. Called together and nourished by the life stream flowing from the self-emptying sacrifice of the Son of God, Christians thus celebrate Eucharist in symbolic and joyful recognition of the unconditional Love and Mercy of God. In turn they are impelled to go out and extend that same love and mercy in service of others. Hence, the Evangelizing mission of the Church is intimately tied to the celebration of the Eucharist. Indeed, Pope Francis has proclaimed that “Evangelization with joy becomes beauty in the liturgy, as part of our daily concern to spread goodness. The Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving” (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 24).

### **Evangelization of Families:**

30. It is the power of the Word of God and the Eucharist that must shape the evangelical mission of the Caribbean Church as it aims to reshape every aspect of Caribbean life especially the family. In addition to the historical forces that have had a negative impact on family life in the Caribbean, post-modern philosophies of individualism, unbridled capitalism, and secularism, among others, continue to be significant threats to healing and the development of wholesome family life in the Caribbean. Pope Francis noted that “the family is experiencing a profound cultural crisis, as are all communities and social bonds. ...Marriage now tends to be viewed as a form of mere emotional

satisfaction that can be constructed in any way or modified at will” (EG 66)<sup>1</sup>.

31. The Word of God reminds us that “from the beginning it was not so” (cf. Mt 19:8). Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, calls and enables us to live the design of God for human love and to be unafraid to announce the good news of marriage and family life in our Caribbean region. It is the Eucharist which allows us to live an understanding of Church as communion, a family of families (AL 202). It is the Eucharist which strengthens us to give the gift of self in marriage and family life (Eph 5:21-32).
32. The Church sees the family as both the recipient and subject of her mission and evangelization. As the recipient, St. John Paul II noted that “it is ...the Church as Mother that gives birth to, educates and builds up the Christian family, by putting into effect in its regard the saving mission which she has received from her Lord. By proclaiming the word of God, the Church reveals to the Christian family its true identity, what it is and should be according to the Lord's plan; by celebrating the sacraments, the Church enriches and strengthens the Christian family with the grace of Christ for its sanctification to the glory of the Father; by the continuous proclamation of the new commandment of love, the Church encourages and guides the Christian family to the service of love, so that it may imitate and relive the same self-giving and sacrificial love that the Lord Jesus has for the entire human race” (FC 49).
33. As a subject of evangelization, it is to the extent in which the Christian family accepts the Gospel and matures in faith, it becomes an evangelizing community. Let us listen again to Paul VI: The family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates. In a family which is conscious of this mission, all the members evangelize and are evangelized. The parents not only communicate the Gospel to their children, but from their children they can themselves receive the same Gospel as deeply lived by them. And such a family becomes the evangelizer of many other

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis noted that, “In the case of the family, the weakening of these bonds is particularly serious because the family is the fundamental cell of society, where we learn to live with others despite our differences and to belong to one another; it is also the place where parents pass on the faith to their children” (EG 66).

families, and of the neighborhood of which it forms part” (FC 52). Hence St. John Paul II declared that the “future of evangelization depends in great part on the Church of the home” (FC 52).

34. To this extent, the healing and transformation of family life ought to be a significant part of the evangelical mission of every diocese and parish. Pastoral programmes for marriage preparation and parenting must be developed in order to aid parents to provide a suitable holistic environment – human, spiritual, intellectual and communal – for the formation of their children. These programmes should be part of an ongoing “gradual and continuous formation” in learning to love which begins from childhood and would cater for the “remote, proximate and immediate” formation of persons (FC 66). Furthermore, families must find a key partner in the Church to assist them in the faith formation of their children, in the healing of painful memories, in facing challenging social, philosophical and economic threats to the family, and in dealing with painful circumstances such as death, separation and migration.
35. Given the marginal role generally played by men in Caribbean family, the Church is called to affirm their masculinity, to assist Caribbean men to take up their role as dedicated and faithful fathers, to teach them to pray and discern God’s will for their own lives and the lives of their family members, and to collaborate with their wives in the care of the family. Ultimately, our children will grow in “wisdom and stature” and contribute to the healthy development of the Caribbean through a loving and caring family structure. A healthy family life will certainly contribute to the self-worth of our people. Therefore, the evangelization of the family must be a priority for the Caribbean Church.
36. So too must the evangelization by the family (as a subject) be a priority for the Caribbean Church. This requires a renewed trust in the power of God’s grace especially through the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist (AL 38). By their very lives, Christian families witness to the good news of marriage and family life. It is the witness of the domestic Church. Pope Francis invites married couples and families to “never lose heart because of our limitations, or ever stop seeking that fullness of love and communion which God holds out before you” (AL 325). Even in the midst of the broken family realities in our context let us remember that “God’s indulgent love always accompanies our human

journey; through grace, it heals and transforms hardened hearts, leading them back to the beginning through the way of the cross” (AL 62). Families therefore play an active role in journeying with other families and persons wounded through relationships.

### **Evangelization of Social Structures:**

37. Justice is a key concern of our Region and is a theme that we return to over and over in our Pastorals {See, e.g., *Justice and Peace in A New Caribbean* (1975); *Justice and Peace Shall Embrace* (2003)}. Too many Caribbean people lack the basic necessities for living a fully human life; too many are vulnerable and exploited, especially our women and children; too many work hard without earning a living wage; too many live lives of hopelessness, especially our unattached youth; too many lack decent housing; too many are exploited through human trafficking. In 2015/16 we celebrated the Jubilee Year of Mercy, we need also to reflect on the role of mercy in a Region marked by numerous examples of mercilessness, unforgiving, and outright uncaring. Indeed, Pope Francis reminded us that where there is no mercy there is no justice and Pope Paul VI boldly proclaimed that if we want peace we must work for justice.
38. Our call is to reshape the social and governance structure of our Region to reflect the true justice and peace to which all human beings, created in the image and likeness of God, have a right. As bishops, we wish to support and encourage the further development of key regional governance structures such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Caribbean Court of Justice, the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME), and CARIFTA. These are pivotal political and social agencies that can contribute to proper governance and ultimately further our overall development as one Caribbean people.
39. It is to be noted here that openness to recognize and respect peoples of other races and faith traditions speaks directly to the plural society that is the Caribbean Region with its multiplicity of nations, races, cultures and religions. These Regional political and social institutions are well positioned to garner the richness of our cultural complexities and dynamic heritage, while promoting fruitful dialogue and solidarity among the various nation states and their respective agencies.



40. The journey to the New Heaven and the New Earth (Rev. 21: 1), in which the first heaven and the first earth have disappeared, is the domain of the Church. The Church has to be the promoter and witness to the validity of this journey. As Church we cannot demand that the world live Kingdom structures unless the Church herself is a promoter and witness in her own life to these structures. St. Francis, it is said, told his followers that they must preach always but only speak if necessary. St. Francis was telling his followers “You must not only talk but you must walk the Talk. Our Caribbean Church must take this salient piece of advice seriously and as Church we must ask ourselves whether or not the structures within which we operate are indeed structures of the Kingdom. As we preach social justice our actions must validate our preaching. This is especially true in two areas of Church life; firstly, where models of decision-making are employed and secondly in the areas of employment and remuneration. As Church is essentially a Communion, decision-making cannot or should not be in the mode of dictatorship or democracy but rather consensus. To do anything less is to deny that truth of faith, that God’s Spirit enlightens everyone who comes into this world. It is important therefore that education for consensus-building be undertaken in all Church institutions. The Church must also be very careful where employment and remuneration are involved. It is not sufficient to pay minimum wages. The living wage must be the norm where employees are concerned. In fact the Code of Canon Law stipulates: “Without prejudice to the prescript of can. 230, §1 and with the prescripts of civil law having been observed, lay persons have the right to decent remuneration appropriate to their condition so that they are able to provide decently for their own needs and those of their family. They also have a right for their social provision, social security, and health benefits to be duly provided.” (CIC 231§2)

41. It is by witnessing in her own life to the value of Kingdom structures in Health Care, in Education, in Labour Relations, in decision-making, among others, that the Church will evangelize these structures in the nations and cultures in which we live.

## CONCLUSION

42. The unity of the Church is the single most powerful evangelizing tool, in that it draws from the Trinitarian dimension of the Church's understanding. It is faithful to the most basic but most profound value which characterizes the Church's Catholicity, that is, it is found everywhere but is united. Wherever we go in the world the Catholic Church is the same. As the saying goes, unity is strength. Therefore, our sharing in God's anointing for the sake of the Church's mission has of necessity to promote the unity of the body of Christ . . . It stands to reason therefore, that whatever is done in the name of the Church founded by Christ must be geared towards the building of the Kingdom since the entire mission of the Church is directed to (sic) towards that end. (Bishop Malzaire, 2012, p. 81)
43. As we work towards building God's Kingdom, we are aware that Mary, the Mother of Evangelization, continues to intercede for the Caribbean Church. Inspired by our Blessed Mother's faith, which continues to fuel perseverance, we press forward with hope amid the many challenges that beset us on our earthly pilgrimage. As Pope Francis says, "We implore her maternal intercession that the Church may become a home for many peoples, a mother for all peoples, and that the way may be opened to the birth of a new world. It is the Risen Christ who tells us, with a power that fills us with confidence and unshakeable hope: 'Behold, I make all things new' (*Rev 21:5*)" (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 288).
44. We, therefore, exhort all clergy, religious sisters and brothers and the laity to be mission conscious and to develop mission conscious activities. Let us be purposeful, pro-active and progressive in nurturing the seed of God's Word in the Caribbean soil. In keeping with our baptismal identity to be missionary disciples let us resolutely commit ourselves to the evangelical mission of Jesus Christ in the Caribbean today.

## REFERENCES:

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*Evangelii nuntiandi* ( [http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19751208\\_evangelii-nuntiandi.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html)

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## Appendix 1

The Jamaica 2011 data shows that this trend continued: the largest single group was the Seventh Day Adventists (12 %); this was followed by the Pentecostals (11 %), the Other Church of God (9 %), and the New Testament Church of God (7 %). The Baptists were 7 %. These were the top five denominations. Others included, Roman Catholics (2.2%), Anglicans (2.8%), Jehovah's Witness (1.9%), Rastafarian (1.1%), unspecified (2.3%). Overall, the so-called Evangelical churches account for 20% of the population. A similar number (21.3%) indicate that they belong to “no religion/denomination”. More than 160,000 (6.5%) persons reported “other” to include Jews, Hindus, Muslims, etc.

These numbers represent decline for the traditional denominations; the declines are largest for Anglicans (20 %), Roman Catholics and United Church (14 %), Methodists and Moravians (13 %). The Baptists, who have remained the largest traditional denomination, experienced a decline of 5 %. Conversely, increases were seen for the small non-Christian religious groups: Islam was 1,513 compared with 1,024 in 2001; Hinduism and Judaism increased from 1,453 to 1,836 and 357 to 506 respectively.

The religious groups that grew in Trinidad and Tobago were: Islam (1.6 %), Baptist (13.8 %), Jehovah's Witness (8.4 %), and Seventh Day Adventists (22.7 %). Pentecostal/Evangelical/Full Gospel churches grew from 76,327 in 2000 to 159,033 in 2011 (an increase of 108.4 %).