

Evangelization is as fundamental for the Church as water is for the human body. It is not true Church if it does not evangelize, hence the urgency of St. Paul: "Woe to me if I do not evangelize! (1 Cor 9:16). "Evangelization is not a mere function," stressed Pope Francis (Homily 09/09/2016), it is rather its own identity, it is a Church on the move, outgoing missionary evangelizing: "The Church which 'goes forth' is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice" (*Evangelii gaudium* 24). The diocese is therefore a community formed by evangelized and evangelizing communities (cf. Document Puebla 647).

The evangelizing mission of the Church generally develops in two dimensions from which derives a great diversity of ministries:

1. The prophetic proclamation of the joyful news of salvation in Jesus Christ which transforms people to live a full life<sup>1</sup>.
2. The prophetic denunciation of all that oppresses, enslaves and denigrates human beings in order to build a better world where all human beings can live with the dignity of sons and daughters of God.

The work of evangelization is realized through a great diversity of ministries raised up by the Spirit according to the reality and particular needs of the diocese, the parish, the movement or ecclesial service, or the pastoral approach. For this reason discernment is a fundamental element of evangelization in order to read the signs of the times and to understand what kind of pastoral ministry is relevant and useful for a specific time and place (cf. Rom 12:3-8).

The testimony of the catechists of the parish of St Joseph the Worker in the Diocese of Malakal in South Sudan illustrates and teaches us that discernment is fundamental to evangelization. They made pastoral decisions based on their discernment. For example, they thought that three ministries were essential for their missionary work, fundamental for carrying out conversions and giving birth to new communities:

- ◆ First, the traveling catechists.
- ◆ Second, the missionary families, whose ministry was the proclamation of the kerygma. A very important ministry for a people who have not heard the Gospel and do not know Jesus.
- ◆ Third, the master catechists whose task was to teach the Catholic community to read and write in a foreign language so that they could come into direct contact with the Bible and also that there were more people who could be catechists with the ability to read, meditate and preach the Word of God. It was an essential ministry to provide people with the necessary tools to continue to grow in faith through reading and meditating on the Word of God and also to ensure that more people could become evangelizers, with different ministries: itinerant catechists, faith teacher catechists, Nuer language teacher catechists, assistant catechists, choir directors, etc. All these ministries required a person who could read and write in their mother tongue.

The Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-35) shows us that discernment has always been a way of being Church and evangelizing from the beginning. In every situation and context it is necessary to create the means and moments for this discernment, the most common being the diocesan assembly, the parish assembly, the meeting of the Pastoral Council, the meetings of groups sharing common ministries, the meetings of particular groups, etc. "To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.... All this is done by the one and the same Spirit, distributing to each one the gifts as he wishes". (1 Cor 12, 7.11).

**Further readings:**

Francis. (2013). *Evangelii gaudium*, No. 20-24; 111-134.

Celam. (2007). *Aparecida – Documento Conclusivo*, numeri: 143-153; 184-224.

González Galarza, F. (2002). *Con la fuerza del Espíritu Santo. La maravillosa historia del inicio de la Iglesia y la evangelización del pueblo nuer de Sudán*, Ciudad de México, Ediciones Combonianas.

González G., F.G. (2016). *An Amazing Story. The Beginning of the Evangelisation and the Catholic Church Among the Rural Western Nuer*. Nairobi. Fondazione Nigrizia Onlus.