

## Faith Based Conversation 11th Monthly meeting

### A few challenges from Pope Francis

We don't want apathy to guide our lives... or do we? We don't want the force of habit to rule our life... or do we? So we ought to ask ourselves: What can we do to keep our heart from growing numb, becoming anesthetized? How do we make the joy of the Gospel increase and take deeper root in our lives?

Jesus gives the answer. He said to His disciples then and He says it to us now: Go forth! Proclaim! The joy of the Gospel is something to be experienced, something to be known and lived only through giving it away, through giving ourselves away.

Jesus sends His disciples out to all nations. Jesus did not provide a short list of who is, or is not, worthy of receiving His message and His Mission is never the fruit of a perfectly planned program or a well-organized manual. Mission is always the fruit of a life which knows what it is to be found and healed, encountered and forgiven. Mission is born of a constant experience of God's merciful anointing.

We are heirs to the bold missionary spirit of so many men and women who preferred not to be "shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security... within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 49). We are indebted to a tradition, a chain of witnesses who have made it possible for the good news of the Gospel to be, in every generation, both "good" and "news". St Junípero Serra had a motto which inspired his life and work, not just a saying, but above all a reality which shaped the way he lived: *siempre adelante!* Keep moving forward! For him, this was the way to continue experiencing the joy of the Gospel, to keep his heart from growing numb, from being anesthetized. He kept moving forward, because the Lord was waiting, because his brothers and sisters were waiting. Let's keep moving forward! *Shortened version, Homily at Canonization Mass 23 Sep 2015*

### Excerpts from an interview with Fr James Mallon

The first thing I want people aware of is that we have an identity crisis. We have reduced evangelisation to being one of the things we ought to get to eventually, as if it's optional. I think the Catholic version of the Great Commission would read at present 'baptise and teach'. We're not too great on the 'go forth' and 'making disciples' is usually just not on the radar. We see this in the operations of most parishes where the primary understanding of the role of the parish and the priest is to meet the needs of the people. And yet, the Church is the only organisation that primarily exists for the sake of those who do not yet belong.

In my book I make a scriptural case that the mission of Jesus has a Church and not the other way round. I believe that it's vital to state that making disciples is at the very heart of what Jesus calls the Church to do.

### How can lay people help their priest catch the vision for parish renewal if he doesn't seem interested? If it all depends on leadership, what can the lay person do?

This is the number 1 question I get asked. Countless numbers of lay faithful have a heart for renewal and are frustrated. First, you've got to intercede and pray for your priest. You might also try to discern what makes him closed to renewal. Sometimes priests are drowning in the urgency of ministry and all the different demands on them. It's important that you say to him, 'We're not expecting you to do more. Rather, we're coming to say how can we help you?' In all my years as a priest, only twice has someone come into my office and said to me 'I'm here to ask you how I can help you.' You could also join the pastoral council and try to reform it so that it is not a management committee that represents different interests in the parish but a true pastoral council that addresses vision and strategy.

Read the full interview: <http://www.alpha.org/catholic-context/stories/214>