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The New Evangelization

When Christians speak of evangelism, they are usually referring to efforts to fulfill the Great Commission. Just before ascending to heaven, Jesus commissioned every believer to proclaim the good news when He said: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

This Gospel of Jesus Christ is very simple. It is a message that even a child can understand. It is about God’s plan to save us from our sins. Since the fall of man, all have been born into this world separated from God our Creator by sin. About two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ, God’s Son, supernaturally came to this earth, born of a virgin. While here on earth, Jesus lived a sinless life. He died upon the Cross at Calvary, and His blood was shed as a sacrifice for our sins. All those who will accept and believe in Jesus (that is, who Jesus is and what He has done) can enter into a relationship with Him, the Creator of the universe. This relationship will then last for eternity. This is the simple Gospel.

Unfortunately, Satan has always had an agenda to complicate the Gospel or confound people into believing in something less or something more than what the Gospel message teaches. Paul talked about “another gospel” when he was warning the Corinthians (II Corinthians 11:4) and the Galatians (Galatians 1:6) about the dangers of being deceived. Satan is a clever schemer. Deceiving people

in the name of the Savior is part of the devil's ultimate plan.

Not everything labeled the gospel *is* the true Gospel. Further, it follows that the term evangelization, if it is based on a counterfeit gospel, will seduce people into believing they are going to heaven, when instead they may be on their way to hell.

In this chapter we will be dealing with *The New Evangelization*, a program currently being promoted by the Catholic Church and designed to win the world to Christ—the Eucharistic Christ.

What is the New Evangelization?

While reading a book or an article, have you ever come across a term you have never seen before and suddenly your mind was illuminated? Just as if a light switch was turned on and a darkened room was lit, the significance of what you read became apparent. Such was the case for me when I came across the phrase the New Evangelization.

I was reading an article published by *Zenit* (The World Seen from Rome) that presented a news item based on statements made by Pope John Paul II. The article caught my attention because it was about an announcement the pope had made about the Eucharist. The article was titled “Why the Pope Would Write an Encyclical on the Eucharist: To Rekindle Amazement.”¹

While I was already aware the pope had declared the Eucharist to be the focal point for the Catholic Church's missionary vision at the Eucharistic Congress in June of 2000, the idea that the pope had written an Encyclical on the Eucharist to “Rekindle Amazement” in the Eucharist was new to me. I found the following statement made by the pope very enlightening:

[T]he Church will only be able to address the challenge of the new evangelization if she is able to contemplate, and enter into a profound relationship with Christ in the sacrament that makes his presence real.²

For me, this statement helped solve a puzzle that was now beginning to fall into place—this new evangelization program was directly linked to the Eucharistic Christ.

Further, the *Zenit* article gave more details on how the pope wanted to see this program develop:

I would like to rekindle this Eucharistic “amazement” by the present Encyclical Letter, in continuity with the Jubilee heritage which I have left to the Church in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* and its Marian crowning, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*. To contemplate the face of Christ, and to contemplate it with Mary, is the programme which I have set before the Church at the dawn of the third millennium, summoning her to put out into the deep on the sea of history with the enthusiasm of the new evangelization.³

Making it clear that the new evangelization program would be tightly associated with the sacrament of the Eucharist, the pope concluded:

To contemplate Christ involves being able to recognize him wherever he manifests himself, in his many forms of presence, but above all in the living sacrament of his body and his blood. The Church draws her life from Christ in the Eucharist, by him she is fed and by him she is enlightened.⁴

The Facts about the New Evangelization

To find out more about this New Evangelization program, I decided to look for more information. It did not take long to find out there were many sources available confirming such a program existed. One article that was particularly helpful was found on the EWTN (Eternal Word Television Network) web

site. Under a heading “The New Evangelization: Building the Civilization of Love,” I read:

As the Holy Father entrusts the Third Millennium to the Blessed Virgin Mary, EWTN inaugurates its New Evangelization specialty site. This site will forever be a work in progress, as we continue to bring to you information about the Catholic Faith on the 5 continents. We hope that the information on the synods will be a help to those whose mission is to evangelize, a mission which belongs to all of us at least through prayer. The historical, statistical and devotional material should give every visitor a sense of the universality of the Church and its mission.⁵



A statue of Mary—one of thousands around the world

Then one additional and very significant statement:

Under the protection of St. Therese of Lisieux, Patroness of the Missions, and Our Lady of Guadalupe, to whom the Pope has committed the New Evangelization, may the Spirit of God bring about the New Pentecost to which the Church looks forward with hope.⁶

This above statement may come as a surprise to Protestants who are enthusiastically joining hands with Catholics for the sake of evangelism. The Catholic program is committed to “Our Lady of Guadalupe.” Furthermore, it would be good to check out what is meant by this “New Pentecost.”⁷ Remember, Paul also warned the Corinthians about “another spirit” that was associated with “another gospel” and “another Jesus.”

New Evangelization Evangelists

On December 12, 2000, in an address to catechists and religion teachers, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger* spoke about the need for the New Evangelization program. He said:

The Church always evangelizes and has never interrupted the path of evangelization. She celebrates the Eucharistic mystery every day, administers the sacraments, proclaims the word of life—the Word of God...

However, we can see a progressive process of de-Christianization and a loss of the essential human values, which is worrisome. A large part of today’s humanity does not find the Gospel in the permanent evangelization of the Church.⁸

*Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger was named Pope Benedict XVI in 2005. He is the 265th pope of the Catholic Church.

The Cardinal's statements make the pope's statement quoted earlier in this chapter even more significant. If the Catholic Church was "searching for" a method of evangelization for the "new evangelization" in the year 2000, apparently that method has now been discovered and endorsed. Remember, the pope called for a "rekindling of Eucharistic amazement" associated with the New Evangelization.

More Evidence

One more piece of evidence that the Eucharist is a key to understanding the New Evangelization comes from an advertisement I discovered in *Envoy Magazine*. On page 9 of an issue published in 2003, my attention was drawn to the question that formed the heading for the advertisement: "Will you answer our Holy Father's call for the New Evangelization?"⁹ Beneath the title, the following information was presented:

The gift of the Catholic faith is of such awesome magnitude that we have an important duty to share it. The Children of the Father Foundation, a non-profit, Catholic evangelization apostolate, is giving away over 100,000 free books, tapes and pamphlets this year. There are three ways you can help this powerful evangelization effort:

1. Distribute this free literature to your parish, co-workers, family, friends, etc.
2. Join our informal prayer group "Friends of Our Lady."
3. Help us purchase additional evangelization materials for free distribution.¹⁰

However, what really caught my attention was the front cover of a book that was shown as part of this advertisement.

It was titled *The Most Blessed Sacrament: Our Lord is truly present: Body, Soul and Divinity to make you happy now and for all Eternity!* by Catholic priest Stephano Manelli. On the front cover of this book was a monstrance. In the location where the wafer would normally be found was an actual face—supposedly the face of Jesus.

I ordered a copy of this booklet and as I read through the booklet a number of significant statements were noted. For example:

Let us ask the question: What is the Eucharist? It is *God among us*. It is the Lord Jesus present in the tabernacles of our churches with His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. It is Jesus veiled under the appearance of bread, but really and physically present in the consecrated Host, so that He dwells in our midst, works within us and for us, and is at our disposal. The Eucharistic Jesus is the true Emmanuel, the “God with us.” (Matthew 1:23)¹¹

Or the following statement that defies any biblical basis:

With Communion, Jesus enters my heart and remains corporally present in me as long as the species (the appearance: of bread) lasts; that is, for about 15 minutes. During this time, the Holy Fathers teach that the angels surround me to continue to adore Jesus and love Him without interruption. “When Jesus is corporally present within us, the angels surround us as a guard of love,” wrote St. Bernard.¹²

Or a third statement that seems to reflect a strong spiritual experience that acts as a powerful attraction to the Eucharistic Christ:

All the saints have understood by experience the Divine marvel of the meeting and the union with

Jesus in the Eucharist. They have understood that a devout Holy Communion means to be possessed by Him and to possess Him. One time St. Gemma Galgani wrote, “It is now night, tomorrow morning is approaching and then Jesus will possess me and I will possess Jesus.” It is not possible to have a union more profound and more total: He in Me and I in Him; the one in the other. What more could we want? ¹³

New Focus on the Eucharist

Catholic Herald reporter Russell Shaw wrote an article titled “New Focus on the Eucharist” that was posted on the Internet October 2, 2003. In this article, he summarized the various events being promoted by Pope John Paul and then asked a very important question:

Pope John Paul and the Vatican lately have been devoting more than ordinary high-level attention to the Eucharist, and now they apparently mean to devote even more. That raises an obvious question: Why?

One clear signal was the encyclical, “*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*—On the Eucharist and its relationship to the Church,” which John Paul published last Holy Thursday....



A priest serving the Sacraments

Then there is the apparent likelihood that the next general assembly of the world Synod of Bishops, which probably will take place next year or early in 2005, will be on the Eucharist....

Considering all the issues clamoring for the attention of the pope, this is a remarkable amount of time and energy to invest in talking about the Blessed Sacrament. What is the reason?¹⁴

Two very interesting statements found on another web site called “Apostolate for Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration” seem to answer the question asked by Russell Shaw. Described as the “North American Apostolate of the Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament,” this group further defines the goals of the New Evangelization program sanctioned by the Catholic Church:

The regular practice of Eucharistic adoration, which perpetual adoration fosters, must be at the root of our response. It enables us to respond to the Holy Father’s call with “generosity and holiness.” It fills our hearts with “new attitudes of humility, generosity and openness to purifying grace.” It will prepare us for the “new evangelization” which will *help restore all things* in Christ. (emphasis added)

In his encyclical letter on the Eucharist, *Dominicae cenae*, Pope John Paul II said: “May our adoration never cease.” That is what perpetual adoration is: adoration that never ceases. So let us continue to work hard for the spread of perpetual adoration, so that our Holy Father’s wish for perpetual adoration in every parish in the world may be fulfilled and that Christians of this millennium may witness the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Eucharistic Reign of Christ.¹⁵

Is it possible the New Evangelization program will use Eucharistic adoration to rekindle Eucharistic amazement, and more and more people will be drawn by experience to the Eucharistic Christ? Christianity based on experience that is not supported biblically is one of the most effective ways to lead people astray. If the New Evangelization points people to the Eucharistic Christ, one associated with profound experiences that include healings, miracles, and signs and wonders, won't this have the potential to deceive? In order to answer that question, we must examine the methods that promote an "amazement" on the Eucharistic Christ and understand their roles in the New Evangelization program of the Catholic Church.