

**CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TODAY:
THE NEED FOR A RENEWED MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP AND
CATECHETICAL FORMATION**

**Keynote Address
BY
MOST REV. MATTHEW KWASI GYAMFI
CATHOLIC BISHOP OF SUNYANI**

**THE 2019 TEPPCON PLENARY ASSEMBLY: 18TH BIENNIAL PLENARY
ASSEMBLY OF TEPPCON
NOVEMBER 26, 2019
CENTER FOR PASTORAL FORMATION, TAMALE**

1.0 Introduction

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellences, Representative of Priests, Religious Men and Women, Our Dear Lay Faithful, distinguished Invited Guests, Members of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen; I feel honoured and would like to thank the organizers for inviting me to share my thoughts with you on the theme, “**Challenges and Prospects of the Catholic Church Today: The Need for Renewed Missionary Discipleship and Catechetical Formation.**” My delivery will be along these lines:

- Current Global challenges and prospects of the Catholic Church
- Challenges of Western Values to the Catholic Church
- The Church in Ghana: Its challenges and prospects
- Inculturation of Evangelization
- The Youth and Challenges of the new Religious Movements
- The Way Forward

The history of the Catholic Church begins with Jesus and his teachings. It is a continuation of the Early Christian Community established by the Disciples of Jesus. With Jesus Christ as her founder and source, the life and history of the Catholic Church are by no means different from the Life and Ministry of Jesus. Jesus had joyful and difficult moments. He said to His disciples, a servant is not greater than his master (cf. John 13:15-17). He calls on us to take up our crosses and follow him. The Life and Ministry of the Church, therefore, is not and will not be different from the Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ, the Head. As it expected, the Church has never been spared of challenges which she has always taken advantage of to advance her mission. She has

always renewed her missionary discipleship and catechetical formation as responses to challenges that come her way.

2.0 Challenges of the Catholic World Today

The challenges facing the Church today are formidable. Currently, the Catholic Church is the most attacked, the most wounded and the most derided Church by the media and other bodies. Included in their reasons for the derision and mockery are; the clergy sexual abuses, the Church's stand on LGBTQ, abortion and other moral and ethical issues. Elsewhere, Catholics are killed and tortured because of their faith. In Europe, Catholics and Christians are leaving the Church in droves. In the midst of all these challenges, the Church continues to preach the message of peace, love and solidarity. She dialogues even with her persecutors. She is aware that she has a charge to proclaim and live the Good News of love of God and neighbour in season and out of season.

Aside these current challenges of the universal Church, each continent and each country has her peculiar challenges. The African Synod I (Ecclesia in Africa) broadly grouped the challenges of the Church in Africa under; evangelisation, inculturation, dialogue, justice and peace, and communications. During our *Ad Limina Visit* to Pope Francis in 2014, the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference brought to the Pope's attention some challenges facing the Church in Ghana that called for a renewed evangelization. They include; **materialism, secularism, individualism, and moral decadence**, most of which are a result of influence of western cultural practices and values.

2.1 Challenges of Western Values on Morality and Faith

Western culture is a broad term used to describe the social norms, belief systems, traditions, customs, and values that have their origins in European and North American cultures. These values and ideas have merged with the life and thinking of Africans since the first contacts of the two cultures. By advertence and inadvertence, the West has influenced and continue to affect the African way of life, without a corresponding influence of the African culture on the former. To infect others with their culture, the west has used the medium of the slave trade, formal education, colonization and neo-colonization, the media, western democracy, Christianity clothed in western culture, capitalism, and the so-called **human rights and scientific thinking**. At the root of the western culture is *individualism, minimalism, Hedonism*

and *post-modernism*. These philosophies and world view of the west have unmeasured influence on the morality and faith training and practices in the Church in Ghana. A mention of a few examples will suffice.

2.11 Individualism: In the Western World, when someone is faced with a decision, the dominant question is, “*What is in it for me?*” This question is based on an ultimate concern for self and not love or concern for neighbour. The fruits of individualism are greed, selfishness, and exploitation. As it is expected, these attitudes are common in our parishes, offices, families, and societies. Many people attend church not for love of God and neighbour but because of what they will get. When people are given positions of service in the church, as Jesus demands, they think first about what is in the position for themselves. They ask and answer the question “What is in it for me? (I had an experience from one of my church Presidents).

Some of our youth in tertiary educations fellowship with sects where their breakfast or transportation is guaranteed; where they will get a spouse or are promised, even if falsely, that they will prosper. Individualism or selfishness leads to *sakawa* where some people, even Christians, are prepared to even take human life, to become rich. You might have observed that the spirit of service and sacrifice that characterised the early missionaries, the first indigenous priests and religious and Lay Faithful has almost totally disappeared. You will realise that more and more priests, religious and many Lay Faithful seek what is in the Church for themselves and not what they can give to the church. In the spirit of individualism, the love of church and neighbour becomes secondary. This challenge calls for a renewed missionary discipleship and catechetical formation in this church.

2.12 Hedonism: This western idea asserts that pleasure is the supreme good. It places pleasure as the ultimate aim and goal of life. The motto of this view is that *if it feels good, do it*. It is good for me therefore it is right. Hedonism has produced and is producing lazy, lustful, and gluttonous people in our society and Church. Hedonism is not an expression of freedom but a license for self-enslavement to inordinate pleasures such as the abuse of hard and dangerous drugs (tramadol, cocaine, wee, and alcohol etc.) The sexual revolution in the west has given birth to pornography, sexual promiscuity, LGBTQI, all in their pursuit of pleasure. It is important to observe that our congregation on Sundays now includes people with these orientations. The challenge is for the church to acknowledge these and have a renewed catechetical formation that puts these on the right track.

2.13 Minimalism: Minimalism is “*what is the least I can do...?*” Not to love with all my heart mind and soul, not to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. A minimalist is always seeking to exert the minimum effort and receive the maximum reward. This idea is the enemy of excellence and the father of mediocrity. It is a philosophical disease that is wounding our age. People want to do the least and still secure their job; they want to study little and still get first class; married men and women want to do the least and still keep their marriages alive; individuals want to do the least and get rich overnight. When public servants and politicians take more than their salaries, they are being minimalistic. When parish priests and religious and Lay faithful do only the minimum and teach little, evangelise little, empower little, care less and still expect the church to succeed in its mission, then we are being minimalistic. The minimalistic attitude in society and in our Dioceses needs a reversal and a renewed missionary discipleship.

2.14 Human Rights: The concept of human rights is being abused and used wrongly. People see human rights as the freedom to do whatever pleases them. When the United Nations and European Union declare certain rights, especially the rights that are against gospel values, it does not mean that Catholics are obliged to insist on the so-called rights. In the name of human rights, abortion is promoted, contraceptives are in abundance, human cloning, transgenderism, etc., are on the increase. Young people beyond a certain age have rights to disobey or dishonour their parents and elders on the basis of human rights. Few people place premium on the ethical or moral implications of their decisions and actions. Some Catholic marriages fail because of the overemphasis on “it is my right” or abuse of rights by either or both couples. Marriage is a contract of love and not rights. Our Dioceses, through a renewed missionary discipleship and a formidable catechetical formation, needs to teach the values of God in contradistinction from the human values of the UN and governments.

This is not to say that all western cultural values are negative. There are indeed many positive aspects that have enriched our culture and faith. The challenge is, our society does not have the moral sieve to sift out the dregs from becoming part of our culture. In consequence, people have a hard time differentiating the negative values from the positive ones. We have copied and have lived those western values that are at variance with the Christian faith. In a similar vein we must acknowledge that some of our African cultural values pose significant challenges to the faith training and practices.

2.15 The Character of the Local Culture of the Missionary Field for the Gospel and the Catholic Faith.

The African asks the question “why”. Why was he bitten by a snake; why did his crops fail? why does he have this sickness or why is s/he blind? Science does not answer the why-question. Instead science gives “*how-explanations*” to the why questions of the African. The lack of answers to the question “why”, generates fear, suspicion in the African and leads the African to a metaphysical world of spiritual forces--good and evil—for answers to his existential realities. This African world view and the fact that the church does not seem to address this existential reality casts a slur on our faith as Christians who believe that Christ has overcome all.

African Christians, Catholics inclusive, tend to resort to the metaphysical realm of juju, curses, or witchcraft to address challenges in their everyday lives. Many Africans think that the Christian God is slow in the administration of justice. Instead of relying on the Christian God, some African Christian academics, university professors in the physical sciences, politicians, etc., resort to powers in the African metaphysical world to protect themselves, their political positions and businesses, their families, businesses or farming activities. Some believe and subject themselves to other negative cultural practices such as unacceptable widowhood rites, forced marriages, witch camps, etc. There have been instances of few priests and religious who, in spite of their study and practice of theology and the scrutiny of the bible, resort to African beliefs and practices instead of the Christian ones.

This metaphysical world of spiritual powers and cultural practices is a real challenge to the Church. But it can be harnessed for the promotion of the Christian faith. Christianity has not succeeded yet because the Christian message has been presented in the clothing of the European culture. I believe we will not make steady progress in evangelization until we extricate the European culture from the Christian message and make conscious effort to insert the Christian message into the African Culture. By so doing we will not be doing anything new since such inculturation abounds in the new testament.

We still have the task of making the Word of God and the Christian Life meaningful and relevant to our own cultural context. We necessarily have to use the acceptable and adaptable tenets of our culture as vehicles for evangelization as we gradually correct the ones that are truly dehumanizing.

I believe that our inculturation of the Christian faith is still superficial. In spite of all the talks and studies, we are still only scratching the surface and moving too slowly. We are overcautious when it comes to inculturation fearing that we may make mistakes. Continuous research and study of our culture to identify its enduring influence on the Christian faith needs to be intensified because the African Catholic Christian is astride two faiths and cultural systems. The Church has the duty to deepen the faith of her members. She needs to speak and use the language and culture of the people to make the message meaningful, credible, and relevant to the everyday living. The inability to use our culture as medium for the transmission of the Christian faith creates the challenge of the relationship between faith and life, and between conversion and Christian living. We tend to live in two worlds and have two belief systems—cultural beliefs and Christian beliefs. This situation calls for a renewed missionary discipleship and catechetical formation that should evolve an African Christian culture. The exodus from our congregation to the Pentecostals and other Evangelists, could be attributed to these sects' attempts, even if falsely, to address the fears anxieties and suspicions entailed in the African culture and belief system.

2.16 The Challenge of Dwindling Numbers

In 2014 there were more than 10,000 faith-based groups (sects) in Ghana all claiming to be Christians (**Too many Churches in Ghana? Isaac Kaledzi, 2016**). The Catholic Church in Ghana has contributed positively to current standards of education, health, politics, peace and solidarity. Some statistics should remind us, however, that there is the need for a renewed missionary discipleship and catechetical formation in the Church in Ghana to arrest the decline membership. According to the 2010 Population Census of Ghana, which put Ghana's population at 24,658,823, 71% of the people professed to be Christians. Out of this number, the Catholic population was put at 13.1%. Significantly, this showed a 2% drop from the previous 15.1% in the 2000 Population Census. Two percent might sound insignificant, but mathematically, it is a huge number and a big loss to the Church in Ghana. The dwindling percentage suggests that we are not reaching all corners of our country and our dioceses. We have become complacent with our numbers and are not reaching new frontiers. At our last National Pastoral Congress in Sunyani in 2014, Professor Awosabo Asare reminded us of the Shepherd's approach and the Fisherman's model of evangelization. We need to apply both models to make more converts as we jealously guard those already in the fold so that none gets lost.

Catholic Population in some Dioceses in Ghana¹

SUNYANI DIOCESE

TAMALE ARCHDIOCESE

Year	Catholics	Total Population	Percent Catholic	Year	Catholics	Total Population	Percent Catholic
2010	160,050	926,647	17.3%	2014	17,157	889,000	1.9%
2014	174,938	989,162	17.7%	2017	19,820	948,500	2.1%
2017	187,983	1,062,621	17.7%	2010	20,567	816,000	2.5%

YENDI DIOCESE

WA DIOCESE

Year	Catholics	Total Population	Percent Catholic	Year	Catholics	Total Population	Percent Catholic
2010	6,318	707,000	0.9%	2010	259,804	761,000	34.1%
2014	13,324	771,000	1.7%	2014	343,240	829,000	41.4%
2017	44,140	826,000	5.3%	2017	385,740	880,960	43.8%

DAMANGO DIOCESE

NOV. /BOLG. DIOCESE

Year	Catholics	Total Population	Percent Catholic	Year	Catholics	Total Population	Percent Catholic
2013	23,550	470,000	5.0%	2013	118,337	1,896,000	6.2%
2016	26,504	334,060	7.9%	2014	208,471	2,025,000	19.9%

2.17 Challenge of Plurality of faiths and the multiplicity of Christian Confession and Islam.

The Pentecostals and Evangelicals have embarked on an aggressive evangelization, attracting many catholic youths into their fold and we are steadily losing membership even as we grow in numbers. Islam (traditional: Shiites and Sunnis, and Ahmadis) wage a consistent campaign of presence and conversion of young men and women from the Catholic fold into Islam, mainly

¹ <http://catholic-hierarchy-news.blogspot.com>: (accessed: 10/11/2019)

through marriage in some areas. Conversions are promoted in the market place, through front house stores, on campuses of universities and institutions of higher learning

2.18 The Place and Role of Catholics in Public life, including Politics.

There are still issues of injustice against human beings created in God's Image and Likeness (*Imago Dei*). There are injustices towards creation. Migration, poverty, illiteracy, conflicts, and threats of Islamic Extremist in neighbouring countries. Our animals, forests and water bodies are sometimes handled unjustly. Conflicts within this province mars the beauty of the Church that see herself and proclaims the Church to be a Family of God. We have to ask questions such as; how can we overcome the divisions in our towns, societies and Churches? Do we really understand that in Jesus Christ, tribalism, ethnocentrism, colour, race etc. have no place? How can we handle marriage and family life appropriately? What should we do to overcome our social and political difficulties? How do we stop the practice of witch-camps?

2.19 The Catholic Youth and Challenges of the New Religious Movements

It is held that "the youth form about 65% of our Parishes/Church communities. The Church should therefore be youthful in every aspect of its existence, its experience and expectations. One big challenge of the Catholic Church in Ghana is the exodus of the youth to emerging Pentecostal and Charismatic denominations. In our poverty, the preaching of prosperity gospel seems to catch the attention of many Ghanaians including young Catholics. They desire to get rich overnight. Accordingly, some of the youth have rejected the idea of taking up crosses and following Jesus Christ. In their bid to get rich, they fail to critically analyse what they are promised and tend to believe whatever they are told by so-called prophets concerning their future lives, family and friends. On some occasions, our youth have been made to believe that a parent, usually the old mother, in need of love and care at her old age, is the reason for their suffering and pain.

2.191 Challenges of Social Media for Youth

Nowadays, it is very common to find Catholics, most often the youth, uploading short videos of so-called men of God on their WhatsApp statuses or sharing them through WhatsApp or Facebook etc. This is gradually becoming a norm that is a betrayal of the Catholic faith.

When a Catholic returns home after work and decides to turn on the Television set to a Spiritual Program on Multi-TV, he is greeted with the so-called pastors or "spiritual gurus" teaching

different things. I would like to think that if we had a Catholic Channel, the Catholic would prefer it to other channels. With the television and other social media, the youth are no longer limited to only what he hears the priest says on Sunday. In fact, all other preachers on the TV and social media manage to get their messages to us by the marvels of modern communication. As the National Chairman of DEPSOCOM, I know that we are working towards this goal but are slowed down by finance and other challenges. Who is ready to support this worthy course; with his/her money, knowledge, guidance, or any assistance whatsoever? It is on this note that I wish to appeal to all Catholics to support this worthy course. We need to use the Mass Media rightly and efficiently to transmit our faith.

The internet and the various social media platforms—Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google, Websites, etc., have been a major blessing as tools for evangelization, especially of the youth. We can also organize and encourage the youth to use these to evangelize others. Remember, “we must innovate or die”. We must seek fresh ways of doing evangelization to suit the changing times and population. Pope Benedict in 2010 urged that *“Priests should use the internet to evangelize more”*

2.192 Youth and Spiritual Hunger

Gradually, the essence and beauty of meditative and contemplative prayers are being lost. Some youth are being made to think that oral prayer is more powerful than other forms of prayer. Sometimes, they think it is by making noise or shouting that will compel God to answer their prayers. Such people believe they have *charisms* and should be made to operate in the Church without guidance. Some of them end up leaving the Catholic Church because the church has not permitted them to minister as they wished. They copy many practices from other churches and fail to assess their moral rightness. Unfortunately, some of our innocent but ignorant youth fall into the hands of these new religious movements while they are in Schools: Senior High Schools, Colleges and Universities. This situation compels us to pay special attention to school apostolate and evangelization, especially in non-Catholic schools. The many challenges mentioned above including the youth calls for a more than ordinary evangelization efforts. Indeed, it calls for a renewed missionary discipleship and catechetical formation.

3.0 Renewed Missionary Discipleship and Catechetical Formation--The Way Forward

Making catechesis serve evangelization (proclamation-conversion) as lasting conversions

is the way forward. The Challenges facing the church in Ghana are formidable. Equally compelling are the reasons for a new evangelization, or an ongoing evangelization, characterised by some new zeal, method, dynamism seriousness and commitment. In our pastoral context and with this new zeal and dynamism our new method should operationalise evangelization as inculturation; evangelization as proclamation, evangelization as dialogue, evangelization as justice and peace and evangelization as communication in the Catholic Church today. In the midst of an all-pervading despair due to socio-economic and cultural challenges, the question has been “how is the Christian message ‘Good News’ for our brothers and sisters? While our people are challenged with poverty, and social disorientation, how do we make God’s voice heard and appreciated.

3.1 Knowledge and Practice of Church’s Teachings

For the Catholic Church to fulfil its divine mandate adequately, it is important that we hold on strongly to the *Faith of our Fathers*. One of the marks of the Church is that she is Apostolic. For two thousand years now, we have kept the Faith, we have preserved the authentic Gospel of Christ by guiding it against error, we have shared the Faith, and we have lived it.

Similarly, the Church through her Social Teachings continues to show the right way God wants us to co-exist as human beings in the Society. In *Humanae Vitae*, the Church teaches us sanctity of human life and need to protect it instead of destroying it. *Laudato Si* draws our attention to the fact the earth is our common home. We have the duty to protect it and take good care of it. *Rerum Novarum* teaches us about the value and rights of workers. *Gaudete et Exsultate* is an invitation to us to embrace Holiness of life. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* assures us about God’s promise of giving shepherd to the Church shepherds who will attend to the needs of the People of God. In *Christus Vivit*, the attention of all of us especially, the Youth has been drawn to the fact ***that Jesus Christ is alive; He is Jesus Christ, yesterday, today and forever.*** We are sure that the Church will continue to perform this role until Jesus Christ comes again.

3.3 Catechetical Formation

As a way forward, the Catholic Church needs to intensify her catechetical formation programmes. The lack of proper Catechesis for Catholics has been the major cause of the challenges the Church is facing today. Knowledge is power. The Bible and the Catholic Catechism should be a handbook for children and youth and indeed all Catholics. It should be taught to Catholics in an orderly and manner. For how can we believe if we do not know what

to believe. We should have a well-structured and aggressive faith formation program to inform, form and transform the Catholic youth through Catechetical Instructions. Some Pentecostal and charismatic churches exploit this ignorance of the Catholic doctrine by the youth to their advantage. *Adequate catechesis* should therefore arm the Catholic youth against such infections. Canon 773 and 774 have this to say *“Pastors of souls especially have the proper and serious duty of seeing to the catechesis of the Christian people, so that through doctrinal formation and the experience of the Christian life, the faith of the people may be living, manifest and active. The care for catechesis under the direction of lawful ecclesiastical authority, extends to all members of the Church, to each according to his or her role. Before all others, parents are bound to form their children by word and example, in faith and in Christian living. The same obligation binds sponsors and those who take the place of parents.”*

3.4 Missionary Discipleship

Africa’s systematic evangelisation began in the nineteenth century, a period marked by an extraordinary effort organised by the great apostles and promoters of the African mission. This period saw a rapid growth in the number of Catholics but not a corresponding growth in knowledge and practice of the Faith. If there were a proportionate growth in Faith and understanding of what it meant to be a Christian, there would be minimal challenges.

The Church needs to devise a proper means to educate and empower the Laity. Jesus formed his disciples intentionally. He knew he would not be physically present forever. He prepared them adequately, gave them the opportunity to ask questions, he strengthened and empowered them. In the same vein on-going catechesis must be promoted so that even after the reception of the Sacraments, the persons concerned will continue to be guided the catechesis into a mature faith. It is by becoming a good disciple of the faith that one can effectively become a good living witness and a propagator of the faith. We need to form spirit-filled evangelisers who will be ready to give their all for the sake of the Gospel. Priests and religious and all the Lay Faithful must have a new enthusiasm, a new Pentecost to come out of their shells and security zones and powerfully broadcast the faith and the Church.

Let the Laity start small Christian communities and establish the Church in communities where there are none. The Lay Faithful, especially, should realise that it is you who establish the church; then and only then do you invite priests to bring you the sacraments. In fact, most of the churches in our dioceses were started not by priests but by the Lay Faithful. Establishing

small Christian communities and new churches, will be faith in action, and a “new evangelization” in our Ghanaian context.

3.5 New Evangelisation

An effective way to think about the new evangelisation is to break it down into three parts: **know the Faith, live the Faith, and share the Faith**. It calls for a new manner of proclaiming the Gospel, especially for those who live in the present-day situation which is affected by growing trends of secularisation taking place, to a great extent, in countries including Ghana. Building upon the vision of Pope Paul VI, Pope John Paul II called the Church to a “New Evangelisation” – “**New in Ardour, Methods, and Expression.**” The New Evangelization calls each of us to deepen his/her faith in, and have a personal experience of Jesus and go forth to proclaim the Gospel. We need to find new forms of evangelisation to reach out to those in our communities who never experienced Jesus and those whose faith has drifted. The New Evangelisation also invites all Catholics to be evangelised and go forth to evangelise. In a special way, Pope Benedict XVI called for the **re-proposing of the Gospel** *to those regions and persons awaiting the first evangelisation and to those regions and persons whose roots of Christianity are deep but who have experienced a serious crisis of faith due to secularisation.*

New Evangelization operates under **three main themes**.

- ❖ First, it operates under the traditional understanding of missionary activity where it is **directed *ad gentes***, that is, “to the peoples,” to those regions and parts of societies where Christ and the Gospel are not yet known or where the Church has not yet taken root. The mission *ad gentes* is “the exemplary model” for all the Church’s missionary activity but it does not exhaust what we need to do.
- ❖ In addition to the above, there is also the need for continuing evangelization of **already existing Christian communities**, so that the Gospel may have an even deeper influence in the lives of practicing Christians.
- ❖ Third, there is a need for re-evangelization of **persons and entire groups of peoples and regions who have received the Gospel but who have lost a living sense of the faith** and no longer consider themselves members of the Church. The need to address the phenomenon of “de-Christianization” is a particularly new feature of the new evangelization (*RM*, # 33).

As a Church, we need to read the signs of the time and respond to them appropriately. We are in technological times. The pastoral approaches of the Church should meet squarely the demands of the present time. The Social Media should be used appropriately for the propagation of the Faith. WhatsApp platforms, Facebook pages etc. should be properly utilised as means to teach the Catholic Faith to both Catholics and Non-Catholics. Catholic Radio Station (s) and Television Station (s) agenda should also be pursued.

3.6 Pastoral Care for the Youth

A pastoral plan that addresses the pastoral needs of youth is essential. We need to identify the challenges and problems of the youth in our Dioceses and parishes in order to respond to them appropriately. Such pastoral response must address the situation of the youth who are healthy or sick, educated or uneducated, employed or unemployed, knowledgeable or ignorant, freed or imprisoned, hardworking or lazy, active or dormant, rich or poor, have both parents or orphaned, hopeful or despaired, courageous or fearful, extroverts or introverts, joyful or sorrowful, salvation-oriented or money-oriented, faithful or unfaithful, married or single (divorced), responsible or irresponsible, positive-minded or negative-minded, leaders or followers. The Church at the level of the parish should be convinced that her liturgical and devotional tradition adequately responds to the needs of the human

4.0 Conclusion

The challenges mentioned above call for a proclamation, in all its senses and by all, of the good news of salvation in Christ. The challenges also call for a knowledge of our culture and the application of the positive aspects of our culture for the transmission of the faith. The multi Christian, multi faith context of our pastoral field engenders an openness to dialogue with other Christians, Islam and other religions around us. Such dialogue leads to social action and a commitment to justice and peace. Such dialogue is a response to a mandate to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Mt. 28:19), and a challenge to ceaselessly seek out ways of sharing and communicating the Gospel effectively.

It is true that the Church has many challenges in this moment of history, but these challenges are also signs of hope. They are opportunities for us to grow individually and collectively as we address the challenges. All of us should be involved in Faith Formation and the spreading of the Gospel to all people.