

Summary of [Message of the Holy Father Francis to the Pontifical Mission Societies - 21.05.2020](#))

The mission of the Church: it is the work of the Holy Spirit and not the consequence of our ideas and projects.

Features of mission

Attractiveness:

- The Church, as Pope Benedict XVI has said, grows in the world through attraction and not through proselytism.
- If one follows Jesus, happy to be attracted by him, others will take notice. They may even be astonished. The joy that radiates from those attracted by Christ and by his Spirit is what can make any missionary initiative fruitful.

Gratitude and gratuitousness:

- The loving predilection of God surprises us, and surprise by its very nature cannot be owned or imposed by us. One cannot be “necessarily surprised”.
- To be “in a state of mission” is a reflection of gratitude. It is the response of one who by gratitude is made docile to the Spirit and is therefore free.
- Only in the freedom of gratitude can one truly know the Lord, whereas it is useless and above all improper to insist on presenting missionary activity and the proclamation of the Gospel as if they were a binding duty, a kind of “contractual obligation” on the part of the baptised.

Humility:

- Since truth and faith, happiness and salvation are not our own possessions, a goal achieved by our own merits, then the Gospel of Christ can be proclaimed with humility.
- We are humble when we follow Christ, who said to his disciples: “Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart”.

To facilitate, not to complicate:

- Another authentic feature of missionary work is its imitation of the patience of Jesus, who always showed mercy to others as they continued to grow.
- A missionary heart recognizes the real condition of real people, with their own limits, sins and frailties in order to become “weak among the weak” (cf. 1 Cor 9:22).
- The Church is not a customs office and anyone who participates in the mission of the Church is called not to impose unnecessary burdens on people already worn out or to require demanding programmes of formation in order to enjoy what the Lord gives easily, or to erect obstacles to the will of Jesus, who prays for each of us and wants to heal and save everyone.

Proximity to life "in progress":

- It has always been the case that the proclamation of Jesus’ salvation reaches people right where they are and just how they are in the midst of their lives in progress. Amid the needs, hopes and problems of everyday life we find the place where one who has acknowledged the love of Christ and received the gift of the Holy Spirit can offer an account of his or her faith, hope, and charity to those who ask for it.

Sensus fidei" of the people of God:

- There is one reality in the world that has a kind of “feel” for the Holy Spirit and his workings. It is the People of God, called and loved by Jesus, who for their part continue to seek him amid the difficulties of their lives.

Special care for the little ones and the poor:

- Any missionary impulse, if derived from the Holy Spirit, manifests predilection for the poor and vulnerable as a sign and reflection of the Lord’s own preference for them.
- For the Church, a preference for the poor is not optional.

All these demands and approaches are part of the Church’s mission, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Temptations and maladies to avoid:

What are the dead weights that risk burdening the journey?

Self-absorption:

- Church organisations and agencies, quite apart from the good intentions of their individual members, sometimes end up turning in on themselves, devoting energy and attention primarily to promoting themselves and to advertising their own initiatives.

Control anxiety:

- Institutions and agencies sometimes set out to help ecclesial communities by employing the gifts generated in them by the Holy Spirit, yet over time they presume to exercise supremacy and control over the very communities they are meant to serve.

Elitism:

- An elitist feeling, the unspoken notion of belonging to an aristocracy, takes hold at times among those who are part of groups and organised institutions in the Church...

Isolation from the people

- The People of God is viewed as an inert mass, always in need of being awakened and mobilised through a “consciousness-raising” consisting in arguments, appeals and teachings.

:

Abstraction:

- Once they become self-absorbed, institutions and entities connected to the Church lose contact with reality and fall prey to abstraction. They needlessly multiply instances of strategic planning in order to produce projects and guidelines that serve only as means of self-promotion for those who come up with them.

Functionalism:

- Self-absorbed and elitist organisations, even within the Church, often end up staking everything on the imitation of secular models of worldly efficiency, like those rooted in competition, whether economic or social.

