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## New Evangelisation in the Light of the Church's Teaching

### Paul VI and John Paul II on types of evangelisation

Evangelisation is a “multi-layer process consisting of many elements”<sup>1</sup>, it is a dynamic reality as it is to go through all areas of human life and create new humanity from them<sup>2</sup>. Paul VI in *Evangelii nuntiandi* using the terms “bring”, “go through”, “create”<sup>3</sup> expressly stresses this dynamic character of the evangelising process. The task of the Church is not to guard the Gospel as a living and valuable treasure, or to hide it, but on the contrary - bringing it to people<sup>4</sup>. The process understood like that is not, however, waiting for a human being but going towards him and meeting him in ever changing conditions and situations. It is the “annunciation” of the vision of salvation contained in the Gospel.

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<sup>1</sup> *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, 17, 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, 18.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, 15

Nobody else, neither any other ideology nor religion tells us the same things about salvation as the Gospel does. Our first duty is to announce it to people and evangelisation is this annunciation<sup>5</sup>.

One should not understand the evangelisation in such a way that everything depends on human good will and effort. Only God is in us "the maker of will and action according to His will" (Flp 2, 13). The evangelising person does everything with the power of Holy Spirit and only because Christ is the source of this power<sup>6</sup>. Neither he or the Church are absolute masters of the Gospel. They perform serving role towards it and they are to "spread it keeping the highest degree of faithfulness"<sup>7</sup>

In adhortation *Christifideles laici* John Paul II expressly stresses the serviceable character of evangelisation. "The Church, which in the power of Holy Spirit accepts and announces the Gospel, becomes an evangelised and evangelising community and that is why it is the servant of people"<sup>8</sup>. This service is the result - according to the Pope - of the fact which is of basic importance for human life, that the Son of God by His incarnation became unified with each person<sup>9</sup> This event, bringing salvation as a result, leads also to designation of the only way the Church should take in order to fulfil its mission defined by Christ Himself. In the encyclical *Redemptor hominis* - John Paul II confesses that only a human being can be this way, seen through the Mystery of Incarnation and Salvation<sup>10</sup> The whole activity of the Church aiming at showing to the world the saving act done by Jesus Christ is the realisation of this way and at the same time a form of evangelisation in the service of man<sup>11</sup>.

Paul VI in *Evangelii nuntiandi* specifies three groups of people which should be taken care of by evangelisation. Among them are

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<sup>5</sup> K. Wojtyła, *Ewangelizacja w świecie współczesnym*, [in:] *W kręgu Dobrej Nowiny*, Lublin 1984, p. 79.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, p. 79.

<sup>7</sup> EN 15.

<sup>8</sup> ChL 36.

<sup>9</sup> ChL 24; comp. *Gaudium et spes*, 22.

<sup>10</sup> RH 14.

<sup>11</sup> J. Krucina, *Ewangelizacja - odnowione imię całej działalności Kościoła*, [in:] *Ewangelizacja*, Wrocław 1958, p. 56.

those who never heard about the Gospel, Christians with weakening faith and those who are no longer Christians as they do not live in accordance with the Gospel<sup>12</sup>. The missionary decree *Ad gentes divinitus* speaks about similar groups, it recommends developing evangelising activity in a few directions. As priests' work among the faithful for deepening their faith, as a work aiming at bringing back the unity of Christians and mostly as missionary activity<sup>13</sup>. Directions specified in this way allow to define three types of realisation of evangelising mission of the Church in modern world<sup>14</sup>.

The first of them is called in the encyclical *Redemptoris missio* by John Paul II an *ad gentes* mission, referring to the Decree of the council. "Basis activity of the Church is meant here, basic one and never finished"<sup>15</sup>. Its tasks are detailed by the Pope in adhortation *Christifideles laici* writing that the Church cannot "abstain from the continuous mission of bringing the Gospel to people - millions of men and women who have not known Christ so far"<sup>16</sup>. Without the *ad gentes* mission - says the Pope - the missionary dimension of the Church as such would be deprived of its basic meaning<sup>17</sup>. It is the first task of the Church which was sent to all nations till the end of the world<sup>18</sup>. John Paul II is convinced about the need of the *ad gentes* evangelisation, "the number of people still waiting for Christ is great (...) and there are wide areas where the Church is hardly present"<sup>19</sup>. Demographic rise in the South and the East is also unfavourable for the Church and the number of people who are not baptised almost doubled since the Vatican Council II<sup>20</sup>, thus the Pope sees evangel-

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<sup>12</sup> EN 51-56.

<sup>13</sup> *Ad gentes divinitus*, 6.

<sup>14</sup> W. Przyczyna, *Integralne ujęcie ewangelizacji*, [in:] *Z zagadnień współczesnej homiletyki*, Kraków 1993, p. 47.

<sup>15</sup> RM 31.

<sup>16</sup> ChL 35.

<sup>17</sup> O. Degrijse. *Od "Ad gentes" przez "Ewangelii nuntiandi" do "Redemptoris missio"*, [in:] *Nowa Ewangelia*, Poznań 1993, p. 111-112.

<sup>18</sup> RM 34.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, 86.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, 3, 40.

ising activities as still actual and which have to be done as soon as possible<sup>21</sup>.

The *ad extra* activity, as this is how evangelisation of the non-Christian world is called, is the proof of vividness and internal power of the Church<sup>22</sup>.

The second type of evangelisation is sometimes called "pastoral"<sup>23</sup>. The pastoral evangelisation is to fill priest's activities with contents. The Church – as Paul VI writes in *Evangelii nuntiandi* – does not feel excused from taking care of those who are connected from the Gospel for a long time. It tries to "deepen their faith, strengthen it, animate and make more and more mature so that they could be more truly faithful"<sup>24</sup>. Situations in which modern believing person finds himself are the impulse for such activities. The Pope stresses among them mostly secular tendencies and fighting atheism<sup>25</sup>. The Church as the preacher of the Gospel needs only evangelisation of itself<sup>26</sup>, it must continuously deepen in itself the awareness that it is a sign of Christ's presence and activity<sup>27</sup>. In changing conditions of life it should still look for new ways of ensuring that its members should not lose a live faith. Forms of evangelising activities of the Church among its believers can be carried out within priests work<sup>28</sup>. Thus, one can say that priests work is the realisation of evangelisation at a specified time and place<sup>29</sup>. Basic forms of priests work in this area are: preaching God's words, sacramental service and works of mercy, i.e. the testimony of love.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, 1, 40 and 49.

<sup>22</sup> J. Schutte, *Czego misje oczekiwały od Soboru? (What did the missions expect of the Council?)*, [in:] *Misje po Soborze Watykańskim II*, Płock 1981, p. 42.

<sup>23</sup> W. Przyczyna, *Teologia ewangelizacji*, quoted works, p. 37.

<sup>24</sup> EN 54.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>26</sup> *Lumen gentium*, 8; *Ad gentes divinitus*, 5.

<sup>27</sup> *Lumen gentium*, 1.

<sup>28</sup> EN 81.

<sup>29</sup> W. Miziołek, *Wizja duszpasterskiej pracy Kościoła*, [in:] *Ewangelizacja*, Wrocław 1980, p. 195.

The third type of evangelisation is defined as re-evangelisation or new evangelisation<sup>30</sup>. It does not consist in preaching the Gospel "anew" as the addressee is new; very often it is an ex-Christian. As cardinal Angel Suquia writes: "it is about a man who lost to a great degree the sense - and a language -of speaking about the mystery of God and about himself as about a mystery"<sup>31</sup>. It is a person brought up in the atmosphere of aggressive audiovisual media. For such person the Christian tradition is no longer the basic reference allowing him to understand life<sup>32</sup>. *Evangelii nuntiandi* speaks about people who are baptised but live beyond the boundaries of Christian life<sup>33</sup>. According to Paul IV so called evangelising action i.e. particular forms of priests' work directed towards people far from the Church, plays an important role in the new evangelisation<sup>34</sup>. As priests' action is to cover all sectors of civilisation, the Pope stresses the necessity of finding an appropriate language and means to get to all contemporary people with revelation and faith in Jesus Christ<sup>35</sup>.

The types of evangelisation mentioned do not occur in an isolated form. Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris missio* says that there are no clear boundaries between "priests care over the faithful, new evangelisation and specific missionary activity"<sup>36</sup>. Thus, one should not create barriers and divisions between these activities of the Church, but aim at the situation when each of these forms supports others and promotes them to act. Only then *ad intra* evangelisation will become a clear sign and impulse for the *ad extra* activity and the other way round<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> O. Degrijse, *Od "Ad gentes"...*, quoted work, p. 112; A. Suquia, *Nowa ewangelizacja: Niektóre zadania i niebezpieczeństwa doby obecnej*, [in:] *Nowa Ewangelizacja*, Poznań 1993, p. 45-50.

<sup>31</sup> A. Suquia, *Nowa ewangelizacja...*, quoted work, p. 45.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 45-46.

<sup>33</sup> EN 52.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, 56.

<sup>35</sup> EN 56.

<sup>36</sup> RM 34.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*.

## Tasks of new evangelisation

The term "new evangelisation" was used for the first time by John Paul II on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1979 in Port-au-Prince in Haiti in his speech for the bishops of Latin America<sup>38</sup> Since this time the Pope has often used this term. To prevent the occurrence of false theories regarding to the term new evangelisation he suggests in the encyclical *Redemptoris missio* a new terminology, differentiating missionary activity from pastoral one and from the new evangelisation<sup>39</sup>. It must be stressed that the three types of evangelisation mentioned above do not occur as isolated ones but they przenikają each other. According to the author of *Redemptoris missio*, the boundaries between missionary activity, priests' work and new evangelisation are hard to define. Artificial barriers and close divisions between them should not be created<sup>40</sup>.

In this encyclical the Pope presents many negative features of contemporary work, especially in the social, cultural and religious fields. He mentions e.g. chaotic urbanisation, mass migration, explosion of sects<sup>41</sup>, poverty, often hard to endure<sup>42</sup>, wasting, irreligious modernity<sup>43</sup> and laicised "areopagi" of the world<sup>44</sup>. These phenomena are a challenge to evangelising mission of the Church. That is why the Pope calls for a "new impulse" and "new engagement"<sup>45</sup>. "I have an impression - writes John Paul II - that the time of engaging all the church's power in new evangelisation and mission among the nations has come"<sup>46</sup>.

The geography of problems of contemporary world appears to be at the same time a map of spiritual life of many Christians and supplies motifs for the new evangelisation work. Although it may

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<sup>38</sup> O. Degrijse, *Od "Ad gentes"...*, quoted work, p. 112.

<sup>39</sup> RM 32-34.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, 34.

<sup>41</sup> RM 50.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, 37.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, 59.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, 32 and 37.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, 2, 30, 75.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, 3.

sound paradoxical, one can say that destroying the traces of Gospel or their fading prepares the way for the Gospel.<sup>47</sup>

The subject of new evangelisation become more up-to-date due to the fall of totalitarian systems of government, as a result of which the Church obtained anew the freedom of preaching the Gospel in the countries of central and eastern Europe. A necessity to repeat the evangelisation, which already took place appeared.<sup>48</sup> John Paul II in the encyclical *Centessimus annus* writes:

the events of the year 1989, which took place mostly in the countries of eastern and central Europe, have universal meaning as their positive and negative consequences regard all the human family. These consequences are not mechanical or fatalistic in their character; they rather are an opportunity in which human freedom can cooperate with merciful plan of God acting in history<sup>49</sup>.

Referring this social and ethical context to the new evangelisation work one can notice that it is a challenge for this work, it forces the cooperation with God creating the history of salvation. Than the new evangelisation is not seen as human work only but most of all as God's reality. God goes before all human enterprises and moves hearts by Holy Spirit<sup>50</sup>.

The subject of new evangelisation is today one of the first tasks which are to be carried out by the Church. Extraordinary Council of Bishops, devoted to Europe sees in the changing world a chance for the new evangelisation. Practical materialism spreads and becomes well-grounded, but a tendency to return to the world of spiritual values can also be observed.

The desire of a religious experience does not, however, disappear, although it is looked for in different forms, often contradicting each other and taking away from the real Christian faith. Especially the young look for happiness in delusive symbols, imageries, turning

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<sup>47</sup> K. Wojtyła, *Ewangelizacja w świecie współczesnym*, quoted work, p. 79.

<sup>48</sup> K. Lehmann, *Czym jest nowa ewangelizacja Europy?* [in:] *Nowa Ewangelizacja*, Poznań 1993, p. 71-74.

<sup>49</sup> CA 26.

<sup>50</sup> M. Figura, *Nowa ewangelizacja jako centralne zadanie Kościoła*, [in:] *Nowa Ewangelizacja*, Poznań 1993, p. 7-9.

easily towards religious novelties and towards sects of different types. It is not doubtful that the whole Europe encounters nowadays a challenge to stand at God's side again<sup>51</sup>.

This does not mean the return to the form of the previous era, but creating impulses for discovering one's own Christian roots. New evangelisation does not consist in discovering a different Gospel but in a dialogue with the only Gospel which became fulfilled in salvific work of Jesus Christ. This evangelisation is called new on purpose as Holy Spirit shows the novelty of God's word and spiritually enlivens people. Its novelty consists only in the fact that it is not connected with any defined civilisation, it is open to all cultures. New Evangelisation must look for new ways how to get with the Gospel to all people especially to those whose faith has weakened. This situation which is called by John Paul II in *Redemptoris missio* "intermediate" occurs "mostly in countries with Christianity present for a long time but also in the young Churches where whole groups of the baptised lost the sense of faith or even do not consider themselves as members of the Church, leading life far from the Christ and His Gospel"<sup>52</sup>.

As there is no other Gospel the aim is to let people hear again the same eternal God's truths in a new way suited to the new spirit to new culture and mentality of contemporary man. The ways of preaching must change as with every century man also changes; the contents of the Gospel, however, remains always the same as God whom it concerns never changes. It is clearly stressed by the author of the Letter to Hebrews when he says: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hbr 13, 8), and St. Paul advises the unsure Galatians: "If someone preached to you a Gospel different from the one you received from us - let him be cursed!" (Ga 1, 9).

New Evangelisation is to lead to a true conversion so as people understand anew a sense and meaning which the person of Jesus Christ and the Church's community have for a particular man in his

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<sup>51</sup> "Abyśmy byli świadkami Chrystusa, który nas wyzwolił" *Final Declaration of the Special Meeting of Bishops Council devoted to Europe*, "L'Osservatore Romano" 1992 (polish edition), no. 1, p. 47.

<sup>52</sup> RM 33.



deepest truth. This truth indicates that man is the way of the Church<sup>53</sup>. Saving message of the Church in the world is the prolongation of the dialogue which God the Father through Jesus Christ in Holy Spirit started with people and still which is still maintained by Him. That is why the Church in fulfilling of its mission undertakes a continuous dialogue with contemporary world. The more efficient the Church is in fulfilling its mission serving the world by preaching the Gospel, the more it develops and grows itself.

Pope John Paul II in *Christifideles laici* claims that in countries with Christian traditions "there is an urgent need of recreating Christian tissue of human community"<sup>54</sup>. The condition necessary for this mission to be successful is "the recreation of Christian tissue of the Church communities as such"<sup>55</sup>. "Thus, an important issue for new evangelisation is the development of the Church as a community or rather communities in which the bounds with Christ would be fruitful and would radiate in the attitude of love and service"<sup>56</sup>. What is aimed here is "forming mature Church communities in which the faith discloses itself and realises itself in its all primary meaning as getting close to the person of Jesus Christ and to His Gospel as meeting and sacramental communion with Christ, as life in the spirit of love and service"<sup>57</sup>. Only the Church shaping itself in this way can have an influence on contemporary people and transform whole nations. Thus, building the Church is the basic aim of new evangelisation. It is carried out by preaching God's word and providing sacraments. These are basic elements of evangelisation. The evangelisation is the condition necessary for the existing and duration of the Church<sup>58</sup>. The internally renewed Church can fully express the truth about God's love towards man.

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<sup>53</sup> RH 34.

<sup>54</sup> ChL 34.

<sup>55</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>56</sup> A. Zuberbier, *Współodpowiedzialność świeckich w zbawczym posłannictwie Komunii Kościoła*, "Ateneum Kapłańskie" 1990, no. 3, p. 392.

<sup>57</sup> ChL 34.

<sup>58</sup> J. Dyduch, *Nowa ewangelizacja w świetle deklaracji Synodu Biskupów z 1991 roku*, „Notificaciones" 1992, no. 1-6, p. 80.

## The addressee of new evangelisation

New look on the Church is undoubtedly a characteristic feature of the new evangelisation. It consists in learning to recognise and experience the mysteries of the Church. "The Church must stop fearing its all truth, it must be aware of how important it is to learn again its own identity and that means it must become simple and clear in itself"<sup>59</sup> Looking into the mysteries of the Church leads to human being. As man is the way of the Church<sup>60</sup>, another feature of new evangelisation is turning towards a particular man, towards a human being with the whole context of its social and personal features.

It is not about a statistical man nor about any cabinet idea. It is about a particular man, who must be treated seriously, accepted and loved as he is, without any reservations and without demanding any radical change from him but treating him as one's companion on the way of life. Only in this way the Church could be "for man" and could enable people to meet Jesus again as Light, Truth and specified Way for the own existence of this person<sup>61</sup>.

In the encyclical *Redemptor hominis* John Paul II claims clearly, "the Church cannot leave man, whose "fate" - that is choosing and calling, birth and death, salvation or rejection - in such a close and inseparable way are connected with Christ"<sup>62</sup>. Thus, the main task of the new evangelisation is showing God in His relation to man. "Man is loved by God! It is a simple but so impressive Message that the Church is obliged to deliver to man. Each Christian can and has to preach with his word and life: God loves you, Christ came to you, Christ is the Way, Truth and Life for you"<sup>63</sup>. Such look upon man discovers the essence of the Gospel - the truth about God's love towards man. The Church - in this attitude it appears as the one who is sent to preach mercy, that is fatherly love of God, according to the spirit of the parable of the prodigal son. The Son is gone but Father

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<sup>59</sup> A. Suquia, *Nowa Ewangelizacja...*, quoted work, p. 46.

<sup>60</sup> RH 14.

<sup>61</sup> Ibidem, p. 47.

<sup>62</sup> RH 14.

<sup>63</sup> ChL 34.

never stops waiting for him. Christians and the Church should not be afraid of speaking that man is sinful. Sin is not a final thing, it is a reality from which with God's grace man can escape<sup>64</sup>.

The Vatican Council II defining the essence of God's Revelation claims that God revealed to people Himself as well as the mystery of His will, and He did this in the excess of His love<sup>65</sup>. These words clearly indicate God as a good and loving Father. The fact that Christ revealed to us God who is love<sup>66</sup>, is a challenge to man. One should answer to love with love. Such a message makes evangelisation true and authentic. It can be claimed that contemporary man, bounded with a civilisation progress, will recognise the truth about loving God as interesting and bringing something unique in his everyday life.

Man's meeting with the person of Jesus Christ cannot take place within abstract values. New evangelisation cannot avoid particular preaching of Jesus Christ's mission. Another feature results from this - what we define as "new" in new evangelisation - it can only take convincing form which is characteristic of testimony and invitation.

Christianity and evangelisation do not consist in convincing of the truth of the religious, philosophical or moral system or discourse nor in telling about what once happened in Palestine two thousand years ago. Christianity consists in what happens today in human life<sup>67</sup>.

The testimony of life "truly and closely Christian"<sup>68</sup>, is a silent but very powerful and effective means of preaching the Gospel to the contemporary man. In the dimension of individual apostleship it is a testimony of everyday life. It includes the sanctification of work, suffering, joy and the whole area of interpersonal relations shaped on the ground of deeply experienced unity with God and people<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> A. Silvestrini, *Nowa ewangelizacja w świecie współczesnym*, [in:] *Nowa Ewangelizacja*, quoted work, p. 192.

<sup>65</sup> *Dei Verbum*, 2.

<sup>66</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, 38.

<sup>67</sup> A. Sequia, *Nowa Ewangelizacja...*, quoted work, p. 49.

<sup>68</sup> EN 41.

<sup>69</sup> St. Nagy, *Świeccy w komunijnej wspólnotcie Kościoła*, "Ateneum Kapłańskie" 1990, no. 4, p. 386.

One should not forget, however, that the addressee of the new gospel is also new. It is a man who believes he knows the Gospel but he is no longer interested in it, or an ignorant person who is not able to say anything about his Christianity. In both cases we mean a man who lost the sense of faith and a language of speaking about the mystery of God to a considerable degree. He can sometimes speak in the language of religion but he does not understand its sense. "It is a man of video and film tapes, whose aware interest rarely goes beyond the surface of his skin and who cannot do anything else with his moral worries but to get angry with others and the whole reality, or to do his best to get free from it"<sup>70</sup>. Stupefied with constant progress in science and technology he tries to forget about God, rejects Him, and makes various "gods" the subject of his adoration. This contemporary secularism leads man to using freedom without boundaries which means the temptation to become equal with God<sup>71</sup>.

These phenomena call for immediate answer from the Church. In adhortation *Christifideles laici*, Pope John Paul II clearly encourages everybody, especially the laymen to engage in the new evangelisation work. "Lack of activity which has always been unacceptable today is a fault to an even greater degree. Nobody should remain passive"<sup>72</sup>. The Holy Father is convinced that religious aims and needs never completely disappear in men. Only the conscience of man must be awakened with new zeal, to such a degree as that he would have courage to ask himself questions concerning human existence and first of all that he would ask about the sense of life, suffering and death<sup>73</sup>. As a consequence it is to allow him to discover again the roots of his faith and could get closer to the truth about his existence. "Faith - as the Vatican Council II teaches us - illuminates all with a new light and discloses God's intentions related to the full vocation of man"<sup>74</sup>.

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<sup>70</sup> A. Suquia, *Nowa ewangelizacja...*, quoted work, p. 45.

<sup>71</sup> ChL 4

<sup>72</sup> Ibidem, 3.

<sup>73</sup> Ibidem, 4.

<sup>74</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, 11.

Thus, one of important tasks which is to be carried out by the contemporary Church is quick and effective help for dechristianised man to make him again a living member of the Church and active subject of its saving mission. New man, belonging to nations with Christian tradition calls for immediate new evangelisation<sup>75</sup>.

### **Nowa ewangelizacja w świetle nauczania Kościoła Streszczenie**

Ewangelizacja jest „procesem wielowarstwowym, składającym się z wielu elementów”, jest dynamiczną rzeczywistością ponieważ musi dotrzeć do wszystkich przestrzeni życia człowieka i stworzyć nowe człowieczeństwo. Paweł VI w *Evangelii nuntiandi*, używając terminów takich jak „przynieść”, „przejsć”, „stworzyć”, wyraża ten dynamiczny charakter procesu ewangelizacji. Zadaniem Kościoła nie jest stać na straży Ewangelii jako żywego i cennego skarbu, lub ukryć ją, lecz, przeciwnie, przynieść ją ludziom. Proces ten rozumiany w taki sposób nie jest jednak oczekiwaniem na człowieka, lecz wyjściem naprzeciw i spotkaniem go we wciąż zmieniających się warunkach i sytuacjach. Jest to „zwiastowanie” wizji zbawienia zawartej w Ewangelii.

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<sup>75</sup> ChL 4.