

Facilitation Document

February 2023

Foreword

Following the publication of *Evangelii Gaudium*,¹ the Catholic Church has been moving forward on a path of transformation. The Church in Montreal has not lagged behind, with the Archbishop in 2018 launching a broad-ranging diocesan road-work project of missionary and synodal transformation. It is universally agreed that our Church must be more committed to her missionary dimension, and that she should be a presence that is meaningful and challenging to the society around us, and that, in the words of Pope Francis, we should become a “Church that goes forth” and witnesses to Christ and his Gospel to our neighbours, to those around us, those in our neighbourhoods, and those who make up the social fabric of the places where we live. A missionary transformation – indeed, but how? Do our Christian communities have the capacity to undertake this? We know well our limits, our deficiencies and our difficulties. Our diocesan road-work project calls us to stand up, to trust in the Holy Spirit, to broaden our perspective, to look further afield than our own sufferings and open our eyes to “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age.”²



The Facilitation Document

To whom is this document addressed?

This *Facilitation Document* is intended for all groups wishing to participate in the process: small groups, people in parishes, in institutes of consecrated life, youth groups, networks, movements, communities – in short, the faithful involved in the life of the Church.

¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Apostolic Exhortation, November 24, 2013

² Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today, Preface.1.

The *Facilitation Document* will enable you to begin a process of reflection, within the context of your community or your group, leading to missionary initiatives in your setting and providing a church presence in areas both familiar and unknown. Your approach is all the more important since it will also offer guidance as to how to structure future diocesan missionary initiatives. The process is flexible and can be easily adapted to your own community's profile and to whichever type of animation you prefer. Your sojourn along this path should take place between February and May 2023. In the course of your journey, two visitors will make arrangements to enter into conversation with you.



Who are the visitors?

The visitors are individuals committed for the sake of their faith and who want to take part in our vast project of missionary roadwork. They are volunteers who will be visiting, "two by two," (*Lk* 10:1 "and (he) sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go.") those in various pastoral settings, such as parishes, organizations, movements, etc., to stimulate a dialogue and take an active interest in your life setting and in the projects that you are working on. Through their involvement, we are hoping to strengthen the connections among ourselves by establishing an approach that will be more synodal. You will likely already have begun the recommended process by the time the visitors arrive. They will join in, at whatever point you may be in your discussions. They may ask you "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" (*Lk* 24:17). They will be able to answer any questions. After taking stock of the work you have done, they will be able to help clarify issues and give things more concrete shape, guiding the conversation away from mere wishful thinking, drawing connections. They will perhaps speak to you of visits they have made in other contexts and share ideas gathered elsewhere.

The following pages outline the proposed process.



1. Meditation and reflection stage

The example of Christ

The Lord Jesus is the first and the greatest Evangelist. He prepared his disciples for missionary work and sent them forth. We recommend that you begin by meditating and sharing your reflections with one another on these biblical passages illustrating Christ's evangelizing activities throughout the course of his public ministry. These passages from Holy Scripture highlight the words of Saint Pope Paul VI in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii nuntiandi*⁴ on evangelization in the modern world:

Jesus proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God and Salvation that is liberation (cf. *EN* 9-11)

- "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." (*Mk* 1:15)
- "But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (*Mt* 6:33)
- "The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you." (*Lk* 17:20,21)
- "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." (*Mk* 10:21)
- "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." (*Jn* 4:10)

⁴ *Evangelii nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI (December 8, 1975)

Jesus manifested the active presence of the Kingdom of God by countless evangelical signs, including healings, miracles, reintegrating the sick into their communities, evangelizing the poor who gathered in his Name and became bearers of the Good News (cf. *EN* 12-13).

- “(...) so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic — “Stand up, take your bed and go to your home.” (*Mt* 9:6)
- “And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?” (*Lk* 13:16)
- “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you.” (*Mk* 5:19)
- “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” (*Lk* 22:19)
- “And teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (*Mt* 28:20)





The Church's missionary activity



Begotten of the mission, the Church exists for the purpose of evangelizing (cf. *EN*14). She does this following Jesus' example and in his footsteps (cf. *EN*14-16). "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (*Mt* 28:19,20)

The Church seeks the **renewal of humanity**: "to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs" (*EN*18).

She seeks also the **renewal of "all aspects of human life"** by "affecting and, as it were, upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation" (*EN*19).

As expressed by the Second Vatican Council: "For the human person deserves to be preserved; human society deserves to be renewed" (*Gaudium et spes*, 3).

Thus, the Church evangelizes by the **living testimony** of her members; they "show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good" (*EN*21). This witness, which includes their presence, participation and solidarity, is an **essential element**, generally speaking **the very first**, of evangelization. It must necessarily be supported by an **unequivocal proclamation** of the Good News of Jesus Christ, only Son of God, who died and rose again (cf. *EN*22). This proclamation – *kerygma* (the essence of faith in Jesus Christ), preaching or catechesis – plays such an important role in the act of evangelization that the two have frequently been taken as synonymous. **Proclamation is nonetheless only one aspect of the whole which is evangelization.**

For more information and a deeper treatment of the subject of the Church's mission, please see the first part of the [Reference Document](#) that accompanies this Guide.



A vision for the future of the mission in our own context



Here in Montreal, the Church's mission, which is "*universal and enduring forever*" manifests itself in a particular manner in our society at this point in our history. The contributions gathered during the first years of our diocesan road-work project led to a summary statement in order to develop a joint "vision of hopefulness:" i.e., the vision of what the Catholic Church of Montreal intends to become, in the medium- and long-term, through her process of synodal and missionary transformation.

The statement of this vision can be found in the [Reference Document](#) page 6-7 (Vision of Hope materials).



Questions to assist you in your meditation

When you consider the example of Christ and the Church's mission:

1. As Jesus' disciple, under his instruction, how can I – or how can we – learn from these texts to become missionaries in the context of our own setting?
2. Are we true disciples of Christ? Do we take part in his mission to transform the world and make it better? Are there people or situations in my day-to-day life that present an opportunity to **reveal the Kingdom of God** or to **help them to stand up straight, as a sign that the Kingdom is an active and present reality here and now?**
3. How can I participate by my actions in the mission, and in what aspects of my life can I witness to the Word of God?

2. Stage of familiarization with local results

During pastoral years 2018, 2019 and 2020, parishes and other groups were invited to engage in an exercise to “See” and “Listen” in the contexts in which they live. You were possibly in charge of certain local initiatives to raise awareness of the realities around you. If so, we would encourage you to review the results that were derived from that phase of the process and familiarize yourself with them.

If your group or community did not have the opportunity to participate in this exercise of “See/Listen,” the results from other groups’ discussions are available in the [Reference Document](#). Page 8-13



Questions to facilitate the reflection process

- 1) Do the missionary insights reflect your experiences in the context of your setting? Do some of those elements resonate with you? Could some other points be added?
- 2) What are your thoughts on the missionary insights identified, and how could they be developed further?

3. Further development stage

Taking the two previous stages into consideration, the following questions may help you in discerning missionary insights that could be put into practice at the present time in your context. Later, based on contributions and actions concretely undertaken in each community or group, diocesan guidelines will be made available to help make adjustments to your local activities.

We suggest tackling these questions as a group and employing the “*spiritual conversation*” approach, a threefold method that will assist you in grounding your discussions in prayer, listening to one another, and heeding the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.





First step

- *Two questions*
 - What situations have you experienced, what questions about meaning have been voiced by your neighbours and by the people whom you meet frequently (not necessarily believers) where the Gospel would be able to shed light?
 - What realities / circumstances embodying human fragility do you observe in your context and which Christ desires to heal / save through the Church's actions?
- Personal prayer time
- During the first round, participants share the fruits of their personal prayer (“what I realized during my personal prayer time...”).
- The other members listen but do not respond. Each person takes two or three minutes.



Second step

- Personal prayer and meditation time focusing on what my sisters and brothers have shared (two minutes).
- Each person shares the fruits of what he or she has taken from their sisters and brothers. Each person takes two or three minutes.
- The other members listen but do not respond.



Third step



- Regarding the questions asked in connection with the answers given during the first two steps:
 - What missionary initiatives have you achieved where you live, in your neighbourhood, in your network or movement, etc., to respond to these situations that you have identified in your area?
 - What do you think you would be able to do? Please think of missionary proposals that are concrete and realistic. What choices would have to be made so that you could devote your energies to these priorities?
 - What do you think we should do in our diocese as a whole? Please think of concrete missionary initiatives.
- Period of silence, prayer and individual reflection (two minutes)
- Discussion around these three questions in order to identify common points. There is no right answer. However, the idea is not merely to note what each person thinks. Points of consensus and commonality are to be identified in order to discern concrete and realistic initiatives that will enable your community to witness to its devotion to the love of God and to contribute to helping those whom you have identified to “stand up straight.”
- If you have time, read points 2 and 3 in the [Reference Document](#) (page 8-13) on the aspirations of our faithful and what they are calling for, as well as on the missionary insights derived from last year’s contributions: Do some of those elements have a particular resonance for you? Do they confirm avenues of missionary action that you have proposed? Do they raise questions for you?



What role will the visitors have in this?

As you become acquainted with the process proposed here, you can decide which type of animation is appropriate for your parish, organization or movement (the size and number of participants in your groups, the number of meetings to have, how the feedback and decision-making processes will work...).

As mentioned on page one of this document, diocesan visitors will schedule times to meet with you. You will have likely begun the proposed process, but not necessarily have finished it yet. A meeting will be planned between visitors and the animation team or the acting committee or whoever is involved in the process, to discuss how this process will unfold for your community.

The animators will be there for your support and assistance, but not to take control of the process. They will meet you at whatever point you are in order to accompany you.



Conclusion of the process

Once your parish, organization or movement has finalized the entire proposed process, you will probably have included one or two missionary activities in your yearly pastoral planning. Whether these initiatives are modest in scope or involve the mobilization of your whole community, they will be your “first steps” towards a missionary transformation of the Church. As mentioned previously, they will provide material for reflection for the Archbishop in his decisions concerning the guidelines to be adopted by the diocese.

At the conclusion of your process, we ask that you fill out a [short form available on our website](#) requesting the following:

1. A summary of the process undertaken in your setting (participants, number of meetings,...).
2. A list of needs / situations you have identified in your setting (regardless whether or not you are responding to them).
3. One or more concrete actions that you have incorporated into your local community initiatives.
4. One or more missionary initiatives that the diocese could incorporate into its missionary guidelines.



Please refer any questions you may have to:
synode@diocesemontreal.org

Useful links



Form to be filled out:

<https://microsites.diocesemontreal.org/microsites/synode/from/>



Microsite web address:

<https://microsites.diocesemontreal.org/microsites/synode/>



Reference Document web address (*Diocesan Handbook*):

<https://diocesemontreal.org/sites/default/files/ressources/2021-11/Guide-diocesain-Montreal-Synode-2021-2023.pdf>