

The Training of Lay People for Evangelism

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The Pastoral Prelude

In addition to being an enormous privilege, it is a tremendous learning experience for a young pastor like me (although not so young in age) to center my thoughts on a topic that is a recurring concern for every pastor, namely, the training of lay people for evangelism. From this training and with the always essential help of God, we look for renewal of the work already begun as sowers, and we wait for the harvest, which is in the hands of our Lord. We seek to always find new leaders to teach and prepare them to go forward, with their sight on him who has already won for us the good fight, with the objective of reaching many more who would also, once the race is finished, obtain the crown of the just judge.

For the immeasurable opportunity to learn more through the deep study for this weak essay, I humbly thank the CELC Planning Committee and the leaders who recommended me for this great undertaking. I have wanted to seek my strength in the Word of God, to find a lay person for evangelizing, and also to contribute some situations to this topic that have allowed growth in the faith. Therefore, I follow this framework:

- a) It is of vital importance for the readers, considering their differing levels of evangelical preparation, to initially understand where the evangelizing interest comes from, what moves us to it, and why it is necessary to also count on lay people to carry it out. To the question: “Do we have an evangelizing command?” we will answer by means of the statement: **The Command to Evangelize.**
- b) We wish to contribute ideas so that this search for lay evangelization would always be through sound doctrine. This is formulated through this theme: **The Need for Training Lay People.**
- c) In light of the perceived laxity of many for deeper learning, we want to know if there is confusion between the security of redemption and forgetting the command of the great commission. We discuss this issue under the premise: **Worship vs Preparation or Confusion Between Redemption vs Great Commission.**
- d) We must give priority only to the overwhelming and infallible force that the Word of God has as the only and true agent of change. It is the engine that motivates all good works in our hearts, transformed into flesh by the love of God. We cover this under the theme: **Lay People Working with the Power of the Word of God.**

- e) We want to bring all this thought to our South Continental reality, pushed by its idiosyncrasies and its particular heritage. This is formulated under the prism: **Latin American Reality, Predominance of Women in the Church.**
- f) We conclude with what in our opinion allows the growth of the laity for evangelism within a congregation: **The Sanctifying Example in us Allows the Church to Grow.**

The Command to Evangelize

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught his disciples through all of his ministry (Mark 3:14–15, Mark 6:7–11, Luke 9:1–5, Luke 22:28–30, Matt. 10:5–7, John 17:18, John 20:21) and also the crowds that followed him, training and sending some men ahead of him (Luke 10:1–2) to deliver the message of the gospel, which was flesh and blood in him. In the same way God our Father had sent John the Baptist and all the prophets of the Old Testament, to prepare the way of the Lord and make straight his paths through repentance for the forgiveness of sins. These prophets show that the people chosen by God cannot fulfill the Old Covenant. They reveal the grace and mercy of God reflected once again in a new covenant, but now unilateral, which would allow salvation through faith in the redemptive work of the Messiah. He is the Christ of God, the incarnate Word that in human time and place, born of the almighty God and of a woman, would sacrifice himself for us, taking to the cross all of our sins and suffering for us. Fulfilling the will of the Father, he died so that we could drown our sins in the baptismal water. And he rose again, defeating sin, the world, the devil, and the last enemy—death. He rose as the important news of our own resurrection, so that we might rise again on the last day. And when he rose again, he even showed his glory for forty days before many on earth, so that we might be moved to believe, not by our own strength, but by the Word and the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and who also dwells in us since our baptism. Furthermore, before ascending into heaven, he commanded us with the power of his love, and out of love also with a promise: “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go 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 I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’” (Matt. 28:18–20) This command is also reaffirmed in Mark 16:15 and Acts 13:47–48.

Who else other than Jesus has all authority (Col. 1:15–17)? His authority is from the beginning and for eternity. It is given in his birthright of creation by God the Father as the unique and precious incarnate vision of the invisible God, since through him, in him, and for him, absolutely everything created was made, both what we see and what we cannot see. And in his name all authority is given both in the heavens and on earth. He has authority to be the only one who, in perfect sacrifice, fulfilled the whole will of God (Phil. 2:6–11), being exalted to the utmost, so that to his name every knee shall bow and through our preaching every tongue shall confess him as Lord, for the glory of God the Father.

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Col 1:15–17)

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:6-11)

Therefore, with the authority of his power and with the same love that he showed us when he saved us, we are moved in love to bring his Word to others. This is evangelizing, a work that Isaiah praises (Isa. 52:7) by announcing the good news of peace and salvation. It is also ratified in the epistle to the Romans, with the absolute necessity of sending a messenger to preach to those who, through hearing the Word of God, come to believe (Rom. 10:17), since faith is by hearing the Word of God.

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!” (Isa. 52:7)

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Rom. 10:14–15)

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. (1 Cor. 1:21)

This faith will allow us and those who teach his Word to confess with our mouths for salvation what we truly believe with our hearts, which will be for our justification. This faith will never shame us, since God raised Jesus from the dead for our salvation.

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. (Rom. 10:9–10)

As the sacred Scriptures explain to us, we will invoke him whom we have come to believe because of the power of the preaching of the one whom the Lord calls, so that we may hear from him through the preaching of the one who has been sent to us. We praise the beauty of his feet, not for themselves, but for bringing an announcement of peace and good news of salvation.

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Rom. 10:13–15)

Through this preaching we may know the magnitude of the splendor of God's wisdom, the unfathomableness of his judgments, and the inscrutability of his ways, which no one has ever comprehended or will comprehend, since no one knows or could get to understand his wisdom. For he does not give his wisdom to the wise or the knowledgeable, but to the poor in spirit, so that no one may boast. Thus no one will know him through wisdom, but rather through the foolishness of the preaching of the crucified Christ, whose everything is, will be, and subsists, for his eternal glory.

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?” For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. (Rom. 11:33–36)

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.... But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. 1 Cor. 1:21, 23)

We must understand then the kind and imperishable importance of God's command for salvation by faith to eternal life for all his fallen humanity—a command that becomes flesh through Jesus Christ and in his example. For only by instructing our laity through the Word of God will we carry out his command so that they assimilate the power and strength that emanates from that Word by both listening to and reading it in the perfect love of God demonstrated in Jesus for us.

We urge the Father in prayer, just as Jesus taught us, so that the Lord of the harvest sends faithful workers to his harvest.

Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 9:38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” (Matt. 9:37–38)

We know that although we sow, God reaps. He reaps as he calls, choosing both us and all his laity. He has chosen us in eternity through the call of the gospel, in which we will be partakers of the truth by the sanctification and the faith that the Holy Spirit works in us, to rejoice in our Lord and Savior.

But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess. 2:13–14)

For our vocation is driven by the force of his love, in which he trains us according to his own creative will, which molded us as vessels in the hands of the potter. He made us members of his own body, of which he is our head, giving us the gifts that, in love, we will use to serve the flock in different fields.

Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. (Isa. 64:8)

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. (1 Cor. 12:27–28)

God's love makes us teach others so that they, in turn, teach and preach with the same Spirit of faith that sustains us and that allows us to speak what we believe, so that others can also believe and speak in the same Spirit that moves us by the good news of our Redeemer.

It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself. (2 Cor. 4:13–14)

We have a spiritual blessing because we have been chosen by our heavenly Father from eternity. This gives us the strength in his holiness to stand firm in sound doctrine, which we have learned and have retained through the Holy Scriptures, in studies and in hearing preaching. We have come to understand the love, eternal consolation, goodness, and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who comforts and confirms us in every good word and deed. He grants us knowledge into the mystery of his will in order to gather all things in Christ.

So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. (2 Thess. 2:15–17)

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. (Eph. 1:3–10)

For this reason, as his servants, it is imperative that when we teach our laity we do not preach human words, but that we preach Jesus Christ, who is our Lord. We preach his power, even in our weakness, and we also are aware of the weakness of others. For by the grace of the heart of the heavenly potter, he has placed this most excellent treasure in clay vessels, which have no splendor, nor any strength by themselves. Always confident, we remain in the poverty of our spirit, being blessed so that his grace is sufficient for us, since his power is perfected and strengthened in our weakness, far from all pride. We boast enormously in our

weaknesses and lack of attributes, praying and pleading for the power of Christ to perfect and strengthen us in our endeavor to teach it to the laity for evangelism.

For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake... But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. (2 Cor. 4:5, 7)

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. (2 Cor. 12:9)

The Need for Training Lay People

Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2), we see that he joyfully sacrificed himself out of love in order to deliver us from eternal death and was exalted to the right hand of the Father. It is with this same feeling of love that we want to reach lay people so that they are moved to evangelize, in the conviction that the harvest is great. We also want many more to be moved through their work to enjoy the eternal joy found in Jesus Christ, who saves us all on the day of judgment which is to come by the strength and power of his Word, through personal, saving faith. The desire to share the eternal joy of the glory of the Father is what moves us to build up the laity and to teach our flock this same message of eternal salvation.

Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb. 12:2)

Each member of our congregation is a potential evangelizer. The more our brothers are moved by the Holy Spirit in the power of the Word, the more we must search for the appropriate and loving way to increase and strengthen their commitment. We want to do this search individually, supporting each person in their education and in their formation of Christian values. Patience with each of our prospects, literally taking them by the hand, will always give a good result. Over time, we have decidedly begun to feel reluctance to call a member a leader, without him having the proper study or pastoral commitment, since there have been many past failures with how easily we have done this in the history of our synod in Chile. Rather we seek over time an interest in the study of the Word on the part of the layman in question, his reverent attendance at the church services every week, and a positive change during this time in his interactions with and feelings for his brothers in the faith. We want to see a powerful and true meaningful change, demonstrated internally and externally, that is generated by the powerful Word and the love of Jesus that it reflects, so that his work is not a needy burden, but that it always manifests itself as a loving expression of our faith. A good example of this can be found in Paul himself, who despite having been whipped, stoned, having suffered a shipwreck and multiple dangers, being tired, hungry, thirsty, cold, and naked, he simply accepts with the grace of Christ his weakness, so that in him resides the power of Christ, which strengthens him.

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. (2 Cor. 12:9)

He does not consider his life precious even as he awaits imprisonment and tribulations, but throughout his life he always remains in the preaching of the good news with the goal of finishing his career with joy, bearing witness to the gospel of God's grace to all nations.

I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace . (Acts 20:23–24)

When we see a layperson work in the following ways—on his own initiative, without fainting, overcoming every difficulty in love, joyfully preaching the Word of God to his brothers, even more, wanting to reverently prepare himself to do it, teaching without fainting, and looking for methods and the pedagogy to reach the different groups in his community, and above all, without staying only in theory (which is never affected by problems and difficulties), but rather working in the field, applying love to his brothers (together with all the troubles and difficulties that this often implies), demonstrating with his own example what he has learned—then we see how the force of the Word of God and his Spirit has produced a fundamental and evident change in him. This shows that we are winning with the powerful and ineffable help of God a worker for the harvest. As their guides, we will seek to support them in this work in the field, contributing our experience, helping with everything, correcting in a loving manner, and praying for its fruit.

We are going to learn from Paul and other apostles, through the close relationship and familiarity that they came to establish with those whom the Spirit called to accompany them in preaching to the Gentiles, clear examples of the relationship that we want to establish with the laity in our congregations.

Paul recommends Onesimus, whom he considers a son begotten in imprisonment, to Philemon. For, as he says, in another time he was useless, but now both Paul and Philemon will find him useful in the gospel. Paul asks him to receive him now not as a slave, but as a true brother in the faith. (Epistle to Philemon)

Paul calls Timothy a "true son in the faith" who has honorably served him as his father. He commends Timothy even more: that he does not seek his own, for which he extols his merits (1 Tim. 1:2, Phil. 2:21–22), entrusting him with a command, saying of Timothy that his love was born from a clean heart and a good conscience, and as he very well says, from sincere faith. (1 Tim. 1:5) These are beautiful words addressed to a disciple and brother in the faith.

Paul also values Titus, calling him a true son in the common faith. (Titus 1:4)

Paul calls Epaphroditus a brother and collaborator, being one who ministers to his needs, and who also out of love announces to his brothers about Paul's health. (Phil. 2:25–26)

Paul and Timothy recommend Epaphras as a faithful minister of Christ to the Colossians and declare their love in the Spirit. (Col. 1:7)

Paul and Timothy greet their brother Philemon, their sister Apia, and their brother Archippus, the latter two with a church in their own house, calling them "dear friends." (Phlm. 1 and 2)

Talking about our laity with the love that Paul and Timothy profess of those who are their collaborators is the common desire of all of us who want to have these faithful collaborators by our side. We should take a living example from them in their constant work, carried out face-to-face, done daily, side-by-side, and delivered from person to person. We should live together with them and experience their own common practices, with the goal to get to know them thoroughly. We should get to know their own environment, the intimacy in their relationship with their families, learning their particular way of relating, including their tastes and their concerns. By becoming familiar with their needs and subtly influencing their behavior, we get to understand them in such a way that, with the help of Christ and searching in the Word of God, we can always give them support and strength to ensure their fidelity in evangelism.

In contrast, by not having an intimate and internal relationship with our laity and by letting them act in freedom before knowing them and having fully instructed and built them up according to the power provided by the Most High in his Word and according to the example of the Scriptures themselves, we will be making a big mistake. We will not be able to trust in the fidelity of their work since their weakness will be more easily broken by two fundamental reasons. One of these reasons, says our Lord, is that his people were lost because of a lack of knowledge. (Hos. 4:6) Another is that "a little yeast leavens the whole batch." (1 Cor. 5:6, Gal. 5:9, Mark 8:15, Matt. 16:6) Both are used by our adversary, the devil, who searches for those of us who are inside the Church, because those outside are his, and he searches for them until he devours them. (1 Pet. 5:8)

In Linares, Chile, our church has been underhandedly attacked in multiple ways by our enemy, the great deceiver. We have recognized the urgent need to first thoroughly train a member in the Word of God before involving that layperson in the work of the Lord. Time in the pew listening to the Word of God is a desirable attribute for those who are involved in the work of the Lord, but deeper studies are also essential so as not to drag others into error because of their unformed condition as leaders, engendering pain in the congregation because of the rupture and separation that this produces.

Today we give thanks to God for having a layperson who is taking seminary studies, a commitment that others made before and never fulfilled. We encourage him to carry out his studies. We meet constantly. We encourage him to officiate the first part of the church services with us. We give him constant assignments, encouraging him in everything, such as officiating in the place of the pastor when he is not there. Above all we seek to know him and understand his environment, and we share this with the entire congregation, so that when he works on his own we can give the same testimony that Paul gave of his fellow workers.

Thus, through the example of the Scriptures, we will also find wisdom in our actions towards these and other lay people in evangelism work, so that we are a worthy example for them to follow, not because of our own abilities, but rather in the strength that we receive by the power of the Holy Spirit which sanctifies us. We want to work in love, to be constant in the hope of our Lord, to always have joy despite the tribulations, and to seek to strengthen ourselves spiritually through his Word, without having a preponderant concern for earthly things and the needs of the flesh. This will shame those who are of the world, but our citizenship is in heaven.

We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For

we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. (1 Thess.1:3–7)

Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Phil. 3:17–20)

Another example that we find in the Holy Scriptures is that these lay people, reverently prepared in the Word, can extend the labor of the Lord according to the will of God. They can announce the gospel of our Lord Jesus with the same conviction as Paul, in love and humility. They can also feel the vital need to offer eternal life in Jesus Christ to others, since having the full right of salvation through their faith in Jesus and being free in him, they become servants of those who do not know him, so that those in turn may also enjoy the same freedom and feel full in their salvation by faith in him. Thus, since we are all in the grace of our Lord, let us always rejoice in the Lord. Because we collaborate in the unity of his body through the holiness of his work, he promises us that our names are already written in the book of life.

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. (Acts 11:19–21)

For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!...What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel. Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. (1 Cor. 9:16, 18–19)

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (Phil. 4:2–4).

Remembering and again repeating that we will not only act in love when everything goes well, but that we will bless others even if they curse us, and we will continue to act in the love learned and kept in our spirit by our faith in Jesus. In love we will endure not only persecution, but we will also pray for those who slander us. We will not make them think that our work as lay people who teach the Word of God carries a special honor, but we must be prepared to be considered the lowest in the world and to be rejected by many, just as the apostles were—discarded by the wise and the powerful. We must never forget in our mind,

in our heart, in our soul, and in our spirit, that "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me," who covers me in the incorruptible healing of a meek and quiet spirit, to obey the one who calls us to eternity. When looking at eternity, we see Jesus in our hearts. He allows us all that is good, all that is holy, and all that is just, so that it may bear good witness about those of us who carry his Word so that we may never fear or tremble, except before God.

We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment. (1 Cor. 4:12–13)

I can do all this through him who gives me strength. (Phil. 4:13)

Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God. Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone—and even by the truth itself. We also speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true. (3 John 11, 12)

We will strengthen a layperson in Christ to comfort not only the one he prepares, but also the one who instructs him. We will strengthen him to become an incessant preacher and teacher of the holy Word, both within the Church and in the homes of our members.

But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life. (1 Tim. 1:16)

Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah. (Acts 5:42)

I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. (Phil. 4:18)

We will strengthen a layperson in Christ to correct weak doctrine and the lack of knowledge, nourishing others with unadulterated spiritual milk, so that they come to consume the Word as solid food that will strengthen them in everything. Scriptures teach us that Aquila and Pricilla, prepared by Paul, corrected and taught Apollos (Acts 18:25–28). This has been the experience of our congregations in Chile, where our members who keep studying and learning the Word of God have brought their family members to church first and then also neighbors and friends and nourished them with the Word of God. We want to fight as soldiers of Christ against false doctrine and denial, which leavens the entire batch in so many churches that call themselves Christian, and that are lost due to the confusion that the father of lies always seeks to create.

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer. (1 Tim. 1:3)

It will always be necessary to correct those who are in error, to strengthen their knowledge and increase their power in the Word of God, avoiding and guarding oneself from the darts of

the evil one. This is what Paul did with the twelve who had received the baptism of John but the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon them, because they had not heard of Jesus and therefore had not received the Holy Spirit in his name (Acts 19:47). But it backfired on the itinerant exorcist Jews who, when trying to cast out evil spirits in the name of Jesus who Paul preached, were not recognized for their lack of faith. They were wounded and stripped naked by the possessed man (Acts 19:13–16). This caused such a stir in Ephesus, that many of those who practiced black magic burned their books valued at what today would be equivalent to around \$350,000 (Acts 19:17–20).

We have an unfortunate example of this evil yeast in our congregation in Linares, since a member who separated from our congregation founded his own church in his home. We will look for the moment that God gives us to confront him with the Word of God, never thinking of recriminating him, but acting in love so that he does not get lost. Since he is alone and has only a feeble preparation, he will be shaken by the evil one and will be easily broken. Many times we err because of our sin of persisting in an arrogant way, of walking on a stony path, of building on a foundation that is not that of our Lord that extols and enthrones vanity and human pride. We find the following reasons for these failures, among other more particular reasons: Our Lord says that his people were lost because of a lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6), also "a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough." (1 Cor. 5:6, Gal. 5:9, Mark 8:15, Matt. 16:6) Both of these are used by our adversary, the devil, who searches among those of us who are in the Church, because those outside are already his, in order to devour them. (1 Pet. 5:8)

In these cases, the early Church was radical and the biblical example is clear. Our own Lord Jesus Christ calls Peter Satan when he wants to separate him from the will of the Father in the same way that he separates Satan in person when being tempted (Luke 4:8, Matt. 16:23). This is expressed without patronizing or exaggerating, but with the clarity that edifies the ways of the Lord to act decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40).

When we prepare lay people for evangelism, we not only seek to teach sound doctrine correctly and reverently, but we must lovingly act in their lives, even rejecting those who fall and turning away from them.

...holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme. (1 Tim. 1:19–20)

Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take them into your house or welcome them. Anyone who welcomes them shares in their wicked work. (2 John 9–11)

Many times "a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough," as our Lord and Savior expressed to us in the deep but, at the same time, simple teaching. We experienced a bad practical example of this in our church in Santiago by someone who at first seemed like an interested student. He joined us accepting our doctrine, but actually brought an advanced knowledge of false doctrine. He was a student who made the commitment to prepare himself, but slowly over time started showing a greater interest in a degree and a nomination rather than in deepening his knowledge. The great joy of having someone support the work of the

Lord turned into pain when we saw he did not want to learn but only wanted a title. And furthermore, in wanting to achieve those titles he sought deceitfully, as Satan often does, to exalt and tempt those who have the authority to give them to him. With the experience gained from sacred Scriptures and the advice of more experienced pastors, the brotherhood would decide his fate, calling upon the name of Christ.

In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. (1 Tim. 3:8–10)

Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have departed from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some. Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness." (1 Tim. 2:17–19)

Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. (2 Tim. 4:14)

You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. (2 Tim. 1:15)

Our laity, in the same spiritual conviction, must be taught to avoid making comments behind our backs. These are often made in a "pious" complicity, framed in self-righteousness, and are endorsed and protected, only resulting in destruction, both for the accomplice and for the perpetrator. In such a case they have lost sight of the spiritual salvation in the day of our Lord Jesus.

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father's wife.... Hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord. (1 Cor. 5:1, 5)

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?...No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. (Heb. 12:7, 11)

Remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins. (James 5:20)

With lay people who work for the Lord, the sacred Scriptures teach us to act in a well-intentioned and formative way, instructing and admonishing, calling the idle to work. We should encourage and support everyone who needs it, with patience and a good example. We should encourage them to return to their place pleased, as children receiving discipline in the light of Christ, which gives joy to heaven.

Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest

regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. (1 Thess. 5:12–14)

I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety–nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. (Luke 15:7)

For this is what the Lord has commanded us: “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 13:47)

The evangelists, writing as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit, left us a very good source to build up the laity who will serve in the evangelizing work of the Lord as members of the body of Christ. With their gifts and in the grace that was given to them, they will build up others, according to their call, in service, in teaching of the Word of God, in caring, and in helping or directing, always with solicitude and praying without ceasing. All of this we will do along with them with love, joy, and always fraternally honoring one another. We work diligently, without laziness, fervent in the Spirit, with joy in the hope that was given to us in Christ. And even when we suffer in tribulation, we will be constant in prayer, sharing in the needs of our brothers in the faith, and with hospitality. In our actions we will be empathetic with our brothers, without arrogance or haughtiness, but with brotherly love in dealing with the humble. We will distribute and apply the wisdom that comes from above, not looking for the bad, but rather the good in others. As for the evil that is done to them, they must learn to leave their vengeance to the wrath of God, who promises that revenge is his and that he will repay, since whoever does not do so will be condemned. We will be peaceful and forgiving at heart, providing basic needs to those who need it, so that goodness may prevail and holiness may be our crown.

So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom. 12:5–21)

“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. (1 Pet. 5:5, 6)

Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil. May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. (1 Thess. 5:15–24)

We find the specific requirements for deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8 and following. We accept these for laypeople who evangelize. It is required that they be honest in the first place, that there is no hypocrisy or pretense in their acts whatsoever, and that wine does not rule their lives nor make them lose control. Nowadays we would include the use of any drug or substance that causes addiction. In addition, the layperson must always take care of their good name and reputation by not obtaining their money illegally in businesses of dubious reputation or which cause damage to another. They must keep their ministry of faith with a clear conscience, with Jesus himself being the best example. They should always carry out their work in the best way, under the supervision of a brother with more knowledge and experience, until they gain their own experience and can act with confidence, not deserving criticism. He must have authority in his family, educating his children properly and, of course, in faith. He must lead his home well. He must be married to only one woman, who is decent and dignified, modest and discreet, reasonable and just, who acts uprightly and honestly, who takes care of her life and that of her family without interfering in the lives of others, faithful in everything. In this way they will obtain honor for themselves and confidence in the faith that leads them to their Savior.

In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus. (1 Tim. 3:8–13)

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For Scripture says, “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his wages.” (1 Tim 5:17–18)

You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance....Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone....This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to

devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. (Titus 2:1–2, 3:1–2, 8)

Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor. (1 Pet. 2:17).

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 1:3–8)

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. (1 Pet. 2:11)

Brothers, our way of procuring all this spiritual supremacy for our laity will be through their systematic and concerned teaching, so that by the power of the Spirit it will produce in them a strong faith, capable of defending sound doctrine. To find those who have been chosen by our Father to evangelize, we will seek the ones who want to hear his Word, defending it without battles, or litigations, or any contention, or anything similar. They will show reverent meekness to the One who out of love was led mute as a sheep to the slaughterhouse. This will make those feel shame who want to make us fall. Those who set schemes with tricks and traps and those who sow tares to seek our downfall do not know that it is a greater privilege to suffer for the truth that is in Christ than for the wickedness of deceit and lies. Christ, together with his Father, will accompany those who belong to him. Christ also preached his victory and his power over evil to those in the place created for them.

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water. (1 Pet. 3:15–20)

Even when everything seems to be going very badly, as if we were walking towards a cliff, we will worry, but we will never be anguished let alone lose heart since our security will always be in the one who sent us. He is the author of life and he will take with his power each one of us, his people, his chosen ones by grace, from our way of pilgrimage and contrition to our heavenly homeland.

Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their ancestors? (Num. 11:12)

We will teach our laity about the grace and mercy that God gives us in our Lord and Savior Jesus, which is revealed to us by his holy Word. Upon hearing it produces faith—absolute confidence in the certain hope and total security of that which is only visible by believing that it will be obtained. Many have unequivocally testified that faith is the sacred means that allows us to receive in our lives the achievements of Jesus in his redemptive and expiatory work, done for all and by all, that ensures the salvation of many. This grace is ours, our laity's, and theirs, those who hear and trust what is preached. It is and will be a true, incorruptible, and unfading treasure of God, given by grace into our hands in order to share it.

Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. (Luke 19:9)

Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So he and his whole household believed. (John 4:53)

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:41–42)

Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized. (Acts 18:8)

They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” (Acts 16:31)

Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. (1 Cor. 1:16–17)

From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And they stayed there a long time with the disciples. (Acts 14:26–28)

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand; By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. (1 Cor. 15:1–2)

News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he

brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. (Acts 11:22–26).

Worship vs Preparation or Confusion Between Redemption vs Great Commission.

We are saved by the glorious fortune that we have in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is based on the certain hope of salvation. It is ours, neither because of what we are nor because of what we do, but rather it is a gift from God, given only in the saving work of the merciful love and ineffable sacrifice of Jesus for us. We are justified and declared not guilty by seizing for ourselves the righteousness of Christ, only by faith.

For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. (Rom. 3:28)

This is how by faith we are accepted by and have a pleasant smell to God and how, in his Christ, we are sons and co-heirs of the kingdom.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:1)

This declaration alone gives us absolute certainty, without fear or trembling of anything in the world, but only before its creator and sustainer. On the other hand, the Word tells us something about the change from our prior life to our current certainty, since before we were spiritually dead in our transgressions, in which we lived without discerning, according to the world, and led by the earthly prince. We simply followed the desires of the flesh, with a spirit different from the one we have now. This is typical of the children of wrath, since we did evil because our flesh participates in wickedness and drives us to it, and we will do evil even if we do not want to.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. (Eph. 2:1–3)

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.... For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. (Rom. 7:15, 18–19)

However, we are now made according to Christ for good works, by grace and through faith and as a gift from God. This is not due to our merit but is arranged by God himself for us, so that our works may be the fruit of our sanctification; that is, as the palpable sample of our faith in Jesus as our eternal Savior.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's

handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Eph. 2:8–10).

This is how palpable the example is of the work done by so many lay people in the holy Scriptures. They worked for the love of Christ and for the gift of God so that they could also become perfect in Christ, through the wisdom of his Word, by which we share this mighty power of Christ through not only our work but also his infinite love.

To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.: To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me. (Col.1:27–29)

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. (1 Cor. 15:10)

Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here. My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him. Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea. Tell Archippus: “See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord.” (Col. 4:7–17)

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me. Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia. Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys. Greet Apelles, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test. Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus. Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew. Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord. Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis,

another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord. Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them. Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the Lord's people who are with them. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.... Timothy, my co-worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my fellow Jews. I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings. Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings. (Rom. 16:1–16, 21–23)

You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord's people. I urge you, brothers and sisters, 16:17 I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. 16:19 The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house. (1 Cor. 16:15–19.)

Now, is this work of evangelization unnecessary because of having achieved our redemption in Jesus Christ? Of course not, although many do not consider it that way. It is a job prepared by God, who created us in Christ Jesus for good works. But nevertheless if as lay people we do not prepare ourselves to evangelize, for which we already have received an eternal commandment, or if as vicars we do not work more committedly to do pastoral work reverently with the flock, or if being in the Church I only focus on attending when I am able to and worshipping reverently, but I do not teach others, am I following the path of good works that God prepared for me? Since we have a free will, we well know that it is possible to reject God, his good works, and his commandment. If we reject, are we acting according to the Spirit?

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death....For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. (Rom. 8:1–2, 14)

So, let us teach our laity to walk in an orderly manner, imitating those who instruct them. Let us encourage them and teach them what God commands in love, so that they spend quality time learning and preparing themselves to do the greatest good, which has a reward in heaven. Let us instruct in the faith so they may lead a sinner to repentance and make him personally know his Savior, who by faith will lead him to share in eternal life.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you. (2 Thess. 3:6, 7)

Our national church was attacked hard. After giving multiple opportunities to two vicars, they were never able to carry out their work. Now we are not talking only about lay people, but about vicars who, because they did not dedicate quality time to reverent work in their congregations, those congregations suffered to the point of disintegration and disappearing. The vicars, according to them, remain secure about their salvation because of the work of

Christ. But nevertheless, they did not accept the great commission that they themselves had chosen as a commandment. I leave this as a discussion, for each reader's reflection.

Lay People Working with the Power of the Word of God

In our national church in Chile, we fervently believe that in order to bring our laity to the faith, as well as for them to lead others to this same faith, the Word of God must always be shared and heard. This will allow the faith to be maintained and strengthened through the power of the Holy Spirit present in each one of us from the moment of our baptism.

Therefore, our lay evangelizers will use the Word of God as an instrument of evangelization, which above all will give to each institution or person the right to bear the name "Christian," since they will place their certain hope of salvation only in Christ. By taking this certain hope to others, our laity will learn to use the Word of God to teach through the Law that sin dwells in each one of us and to move us to repentance. But the Law by itself would produce despair and even hopelessness, so the role of our evangelizer is to always and above anything bring the good news of salvation, which will surely give comfort to all.

The purpose of all the Word of God is to teach Christ, since he defeated death, and through this Word, he opens our eyes to immortality. Christ is the head of the Church that preaches his Word and gives it all its fullness, by teaching him as the firstborn of the resurrection. The resurrection will also be ours by faith in him, since his propitiation was accepted by the Father to reconcile us with him.

But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (2 Tim. 1:10)

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Col. 1:18–20)

We must emphasize these eternal truths to our lay evangelizers, so that they believe and teach them throughout their Christian life. This will allow them not only to live with total dignity in the security of what has been and of which we have a testimony in Christ, but it will also allow us to achieve eternal life through faith in our Savior. The laity must be committed to constant training—once a week in addition to each day of worship—in order to perform their reverent work.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." (Rom. 1:16,17)

However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived"—the things God has prepared for those who love him. These are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. (1 Cor. 2:9,10)

Each lay person needs to assimilate the power of God himself in his Word, which will give encouragement and strength to each one of our lay people to project what they seek and what they do in Christ. We have the clear conscience that this gospel that we teach is not of man and has the only wisdom and source of power that is capable of creating, keeping, and strengthening our faith. Therefore, following the example of Paul, we only need to know of Jesus Christ, who allowed himself to be crucified because of his love for us. In him our weakness is extrapolated by the power of the Spirit of God.

For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. (Phil. 2:13)

For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power. (1 Cor. 2:2-5)

The Word of God will be a protective shield against any evil for our laity. The evangelizer who preaches it, prays in it, and is clothed in it like armor, will go on his way rejecting any attack and trick of the evil one. It will allow him to stand firm against the desires of the flesh as well as against the even more powerful hordes of spiritual evils.

Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. (Eph. 6:11-20)

In addition, he will count on his powerful prayers and those of all the faithful so that the mission of evangelizing and sowing the seed of the Word produces the fruit that Christ will reap.

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people. (1 Tim. 2:1)

Latin American Reality, Predominance of Women in the Church.

After touring the churches of our South America, we see a fairly common gender landscape that reveals a significant shortage of men and a notorious predominance of women in our

congregations. The Word of God places women under the authority of men and prevents them from preaching or teaching in congregations, except to other women or children. However, when their role is well understood according to sound doctrine, women make a great contribution as lay evangelizers.

I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety. (1 Tim. 2:9–15)

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. (Eph. 5:22–32)

Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. (1 Cor. 14:34, 35)

In our church in Chile, the attitude of some women who have not understood this doctrinal role has also been a stumbling block, especially reinforced by the misunderstanding of female empowerment and equality which the world promotes around the figure of the woman so they feel victimized when they are corrected in love and under the teaching of the Word of God. But nevertheless, correction is often necessary so that their evangelizing work is well carried out.

The marked difference regarding gender in our congregations may have various reasons. Perhaps the most important is the social pressure that Latin American culture places on men as providers, which subjects them to long and exhausting work hours to meet the needs of their family. They then take the day of rest in a very literal and physical way. In the same way, social pressure portrays women as more spiritual and emotional while men are colder and more rational. Often going to church is seen as “a women's thing.” In addition, women see in the church a place to share and interact with their peers, although we do not want our churches to become social clubs. In a way, women consider the church as an extension of their homes, for which they contribute willingly to satisfy their more domestic needs. In Roman Catholic culture, deeply rooted in South America, the Virgin Mary plays a significant

role, which is perhaps another reason that explains the greater participation of women in churches. Another reason that makes men shy away from congregations is that they are sought out for positions and given responsibilities as soon as they come in. If they do not take on those responsibilities, it will be an embarrassment to their God-given leadership role. Finally, it is God who chooses us and puts us in our places. So let us cover ourselves with the love that Christ clothes us with, in fellowship and brotherhood, giving priority to the other without criticisms that separate. Let us have the patience that unites, in order to evangelize and make new members through the example of our Christian attitude, always following the path of sound doctrine.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. (Col. 3:12–15)

The Sanctifying Example in us Allows the Church to Grow.

We have heard and understood, through the scriptural examples, the power of the Word of God that we want our lay people to learn. We want also for them to experience it personally, since the strength and power of the Word of God allow faith to be manifested in spiritually dead people and to transform them, in the love that Christ showed us, to eternal life in God the Father. And although we live a complete life of repentance and contrition for our constant sins in the time of grace and pilgrimage on this earth, we are saints in Christ, thanks to this transformation produced by the Word of God and his Holy Spirit who dwells in us. It is only a gift from God that Christ freed us from sin, which makes us acceptable to him for eternal life. Thanks to this vital change, we bear fruits of sanctification that lead us to eternal life, through the gift of God in Christ. These fruits also make a difference with respect to being Christians, since they will move a layperson to take on the mission of preaching the gospel of Christ, which will also allow a vital change in those who hear the Word of God. This sanctification will make a positive change in the evangelizing Christian. It will also draw those closest to him, by the example of his good works, to this different way of life that leaves behind submission to sin and replaces evil with love. He will joyfully serve the one and true God, putting him before all things and knowing his eternal call through his Word.

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 6:22,23)

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Tim. 4:13–16)

God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless

for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. (Phil. 1:8–11)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Gal. 5:22,23)

God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. (Heb. 6:10,11)

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. (2 Tim. 2:1,2)

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. (1 Tim. 1:12)

Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself. (1 Tim. 2:10–13)

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple. (1 Cor. 3:16, 17)