Jesus’ audience
- Worked their small blocks of land, or when they lost their land they became day labourers, beggars or prostitutes
- Patriarchal and family oriented
- Women were largely kept in the home
- Survival, honour and some dignity

Listening to Jesus’ parables
- These are the people Jesus was speaking to and we have to listen with their ears
- It was their situation he was addressing.
- Prodigal Son Lk. 15: 11-32
- It was revolutionary and good news for the poor

Jesus’ “option for the sick”
- Sickness was common in Galilee: the blind, paralysed, skin diseases and mentally ill
- The sick were abandoned by neighbours, society and their religion and with no means to earn a living they were reduced to begging.
- Jesus saw them by the roadside and he loved them
- Abandoned by God and humanity, stigmatised and excluded from community life, they were probably the most marginalised sector of Galilee society
- That is why Jesus loved them. His highest concern was for the suffering and most unfortunate.
- He wanted to show them that God was especially with those who were suffering and abandoned

Jesus’ ministry of Mercy
- Jesus not only healed but restored them to relationships and community
- The sick and abandoned no longer felt alone and he awakened previously unrecognised energy in people
- He revolutionised their understanding of God and of themselves.
- He was contagious with health and life
Mercy takes precedence over holiness

- He doesn't demand formal rites of repentance
- Often he just dines with "sinners", touches or is touched by them
- He understands that those who lack everything are also condemned to live in shame without honour and dignity
- This does not mean that commandments are unimportant, but spiritual progress takes time and right now they need acceptance, love and confidence
- Grace comes before judgement in the reign of God

The Joy of the Gospel

I. A joyful, positive message
II. A warm & beautiful Church
III. A missionary Church
IV. A merciful Church
V. A poor Church serving the poor
VI. A discerning, pilgrim Church

A joyful, positive, & beautiful message

- An inspiring vision rather than a critique of the world
- A joy ever new, a joy ever shared. #1
- "A sinner" who has experienced the healing love of Christ
- And wants to share this
- Mission is not about winning an argument. “Only the beauty of God can attract.” Cf. #15

To evangelise we must looked redeemed

- Nietzsche’s challenge
- Christians who look like “Lent without Easter” #6, or people “who have just come back from a funeral” #10, “querulous and disillusioned pessimists, sourpusses” #85, “defeated generals” #96
- Evangelisers that are dejected, discouraged, and impatient or anxious?
- The Taoist Holy man
"We need to enter the darkness, the night in which so many of our brothers live. We need to be able to make contact with them and let them feel our closeness, without letting ourselves be wrapped up in that darkness and influenced by it."

"Unless we train ministers capable of warming people’s hearts, of walking with them in the night, of dialoguing with their hopes and disappointments, of mending their brokenness, what hope can we have for our present and future journey?"

"Effective Christian witness is not about bombarding people with religious messages, but about our willingness to be available to others ‘by patiently & respectfully engaging their questions & their doubts’..."

Believing they have something worthwhile to say

“People only express themselves when they are not merely tolerated, but know that they are appreciated.”

“We are challenged to be people of depth, attentive to what is happening around us and spiritually alert.”

Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God’s voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades. #2

“Life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort.” #10

I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. #49

As a missionary, the world is his central concern not the church
IV. A merciful church

Deus semper major

Pilgrim church always searching, crossing frontiers & journeying to the outskirts to find God in all things

Respecting others & befriending the world

We will need developed skills at discernment to recognise God in the world and know how to be merciful

Discernment done in consolation and not out of fear

V. A place where ‘the poor feel at home’ (199)

VI. A discerning, pilgrim Church

Francis’ “missionary option”

I dream of a “missionary option”, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation...” #27

Each particular Church, as a portion of the Catholic Church under the leadership of its bishop, is likewise called to missionary conversion. #30

Francis’ Missionary challenge

Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: “We have always done it this way”. I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities. #33

We must recognize that if part of our baptized people lack a sense of belonging to the Church, this is also due to certain structures and the occasionally unwelcoming atmosphere of some of our parishes and communities, or to a bureaucratic way of dealing with problems, be they simple or complex, in the lives of our people. In many places an administrative approach prevails over a pastoral approach... #63

Thank you

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