



**THE MOST REVEREND PETER SMITH L.L.B., J.C.D., K.C.\*H.S.,  
ARCHBISHOP OF SOUTHWARK,  
ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE, 150 ST. GEORGE'S ROAD, SOUTHWARK, LONDON, SE1 6HX  
TEL: 020 7928 2495 FAX: 020 7928 7833**

---

**Pastoral Letter to be read  
on the Twenty-Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time 2016  
Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2016  
*The Jubilee year of Mercy***

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In today's *Gospel* reading we have heard one of the Parables of Mercy from St Luke which we're hearing throughout this Jubilee Year of Mercy. Today's parable of the Rich Man and the Beggar, Lazarus, contains a stark warning from Our Lord: we can't expect eternal happiness in heaven if we have been self-centred and unmerciful like the rich man in the parable and like the Pharisees of Jesus' own day. The *First Reading* from the prophet Amos contains the same admonition about those who enjoy the good things in life whilst ignoring those in need. And the very end of St Matthew's Gospel clearly tells us what our mission is as Baptized Christians: "*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 that I have commanded you*".

This mission we've been given is often referred to as the 'New Evangelization', and Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* urges all Baptized Christians to take up this task with joy and with urgency: "*I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by joy*". This mission is central to our very purpose as the Church, and all of us in the Archdiocese whether lay, clerical or religious should be completely and wholeheartedly committed to it.

But there is an old saying: 'you can't give what you don't have'. If we are to pass on to others the Gospel message and our faith in Jesus Christ, as he has commanded us to do, we must know the Gospel and be able to explain why we believe in it. In a world full of uncertainty and confusion, parents often struggle to pass on the faith to their children, and even faithful Catholics are often hesitant in trying to explain what we believe to those who enquire. It's for this reason that in January 2017 we are launching a new Diocesan Certificate in Catechesis, in conjunction with the School of the Annunciation at Buckfast Abbey.

This new diocesan course is intended especially for catechists in our parishes and chaplaincies, but it will also be of importance and interest to teachers in our schools, to all who are engaged in faith formation in parishes, as well as parents, grandparents, readers at Mass, those involved in Children's Liturgy of the Word, and anyone keen to know the faith better, and how to defend it and pass it on to others. The course is mainly on-line together with study days at the Diocesan Centre for Catholic Formation, and is both informative and highly practical. I'm quite sure that it will give catechists and others the confidence to teach the faith of Christ and his Church, and so to proclaim the Gospel.

For our own sakes we mustn't be like the rich man, and those criticised by Amos and by Jesus in today's readings: self-centred, complacent and slothful. By virtue of our Baptism and Confirmation, Jesus Christ has given us all the task of evangelizing, of spreading the Good News, and as Pope Francis has reminded us, our task is urgent: "*we cannot postpone our evangelizing mission*". So we need to accept our personal responsibility and take the necessary steps to become better informed and educated about our faith, knowing that through our Baptism and Confirmation God has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit who doesn't leave us to rely simply on our own resources, but empowers us to do as Jesus asks of us.

I am urging those who are already catechists, those thinking of becoming a catechist and all who wish to know how to pass on the faith, to consider enrolling on this new course, and I am asking Parish Priests and Chaplains to encourage their parishioners to do so.

I am aware that many parishes and individuals are already doing much to spread the Good News of Jesus, and I thank those of you who are, and I thank God for it. Now, at this time, echoing Pope Francis' words I want to encourage all parishes, and in particular parish councils, to focus on the task of evangelization, to form Parish Evangelization Teams, to ensure that they have sufficient resources and formation for their mission, and to help equip all the people of God in our diocese to have "*a disciple's tongue*" as Isaiah puts it.

In the *Second Reading* today St Paul refers to speaking up for the truth in front of many witnesses. This is the duty and the joy to which we are all called, not to promote ourselves but to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, who is "*the King of kings and only Ruler of all, who alone is immortal... to Him be honour and everlasting power*".

Full information about the new Diocesan Certificate in Catechesis has been sent by the Centre for Catholic Formation to all parishes and chaplaincies so why not have a word with your parish priest or assistant priest and perhaps arrange a gathering to look at the resources which will be available to help you, or you can contact the Diocesan Centre through its website, or by phone or email.

With my gratitude and an assurance of my prayers for you all,



Archbishop of Southwark

Given at Southwark, 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2016, Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

For Information: Centre for Catholic Formation  
21 Tooting Bec Road, London SW17 8BS.  
Website [www.ccftootingbec.org.uk](http://www.ccftootingbec.org.uk)  
Telephone Number: 020 8672 7684  
E-mail Address – [office@ccftootingbec.org.uk](mailto:office@ccftootingbec.org.uk)