

Bishop Aveline - 1st Teaching

Thank you to everyone for welcoming me to join you here for the last few days. I don't know about you, but I'm very happy with the discussions that we've already been able to have yesterday and so far today. I am very happy to be here, to listen to you, to try to understand you, and perhaps to help you a little bit. This morning, before the election part of our meeting starts tomorrow, let's place ourselves together, as a community in God's hands. To help us to do this, I would like to share with you 2 verses from the Bible. The first is from the prophet Hosea, chapter 2, verses 14 and 15. "I am going to lead you into the desert and speak to your heart, and you will answer me as in the days of your youth." We need to receive this text not only for each one of us personally, but for the Emmanuel Community as a whole. It's as if the Lord was saying to your community "I am going to lead you into the desert and speak to your heart, and you will answer me as in the days of your youth." These elections are one way in which you are responding to this call. The other text I would like to share with you is from Psalm 32 (31): 8-9: "I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not keep with you." I really like this text because it expresses how much we need to trust the Lord. I am giving you these 2 texts to guide you today and in the coming days, and they should be taken not only for each of you personally, but for all of you together, as brothers and sisters in the Emmanuel Community.

I was asked to give 2 talks today, and so I suggested to those running the session that this morning I could talk generally about the Church, and the challenges she is facing today. Then, this afternoon, I will talk more specifically about how all of that is applicable to the Emmanuel Community, and the challenges that your Community will face in the next 5 years. If I had to sum everything up in one sentence, I would say "the most important thing for the Church today is that she accomplishes her mission. That's all." Thank you for listening! To accomplish her mission; that is the goal of everything we are doing, of every combat we are continuing to fight. What is more complicated, and what I would like to try to explore with you is the meaning of this mission. What does it entail? How should we go about it? What is at the heart of this mission? In other words, I want us to better understand the Church's mission so that we might better carry it out. In order to do this, I would like to suggest 3 words which allow us to understand the mission of the Church. The first word is "service." And I'd like to discuss this word 'service' in relation to John, Chapter 3:16: "God so loved the world that he sent his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

The **mission** of the Church is service, and I have 4 things to say about this

- Firstly, the mission of the Church is to be at the service of the love with which God loves the world. That's the first movement, God loved us first, "God so loved the world!" If you want to understand the mission of the Church, well, the Church is here to be of service to God in His love for the world. In the next verse, it says: "For God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:17). So the very notion of the Church is linked to love and the salvation of the world. Therefore, the mission of the Church is also linked to love and to salvation, we need to always remember these two important themes. If we allow ourselves to become content with announcing salvation without taking the time to love, this would not be faithful to the mission of the Church. We need to be on the lookout for this,

because if we are announcing salvation without taking the time to love the world, we are not being faithful to the Church's mission. In the same way, if all we are doing is loving the world, without making the effort to give witness to the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, then we are not being faithful to the mission of the Church. Moreover, we have to give witness always by our actions, and wherever possible, also by speaking the truth to others. So we need to keep both love and salvation in mind

- Second point. Understanding the Church's mission in this way (as being at the service of the relationship between God and the world) has important implications for the Church. It means that the Church must be constantly working to place God and the world (not herself) at the centre of her life and mission. This requires a real and ongoing conversion. This is because the Bible doesn't say "God so loved the Church that he gave His only Son" but rather: "God so loved the world." So, the Church cannot be centred on herself! She exists to serve the relationship between God and the world. This means that the centre, the heart of the Church is not found in herself, nor even in a privileged relationship with God. The Church's identity and centre is in a relationship between God and the world. So you see that's it's a work in progress for the Church to not be self-centred. We can see throughout history that whenever the Church has succumbed to the illusion that she is her own centre of gravity, when she becomes self-centred, as if everything revolves around her, she loses sight of the love of God for the world. This is a constant temptation, and each time the Church falls into it, she becomes so focussed on herself that she loses sight of the love of God for the world. What use is a magnificent Church if she has lost sight of her fundamental purpose and mission? She needs to avoid becoming self-centred, and sometimes the way in which God loves the world surprises us. I'm going to go one step further. Each time that the Church has become too preoccupied with her own survival, she has neglected to give witness to the life that comes from God, this life which is salvation for the world. We can say this about the Church in general, but I think that it also applies to communities within the Church. Each time a community like yours, the Emmanuel Community, succumbs to the temptation to be obsessed with its survival, it fails to fulfil its mission. It's a real point of conversion for the Church because it is difficult for her to avoid being obsessed with her own survival. Nonetheless, it is so important! Take some of the images from the Gospel. The kingdom of heaven is like yeast in the dough. At the end, what counts is not that we can find the yeast, but that the dough should be cooked so that it can be eaten and shared. Or again, the disciples are the salt of the earth. When you eat something, you don't try to find the grains of salt, but you taste it in the dish. The disciples are also called the light of the world. It would be a mistake to look at the lamp, we look at what it lights up. In each image, there is no self-centredness, but a turning away from self towards other things. This is necessary, because without the yeast, the dough would not rise, without the salt, the food would be bland and flavourless, and without the lamp, how would we see? So the Church is necessary but she is not the centre, her mission is to serve.
- Third point. This understanding of the Church as a servant of the relationship between God and the world can be expressed in other terms. We can call the Church a ministry. And it is because the Church herself is a ministry, that she is organised into different ministries, plural. There are different ministries and ministers, ordained and not ordained, but each is important and has a role to play. Moreover, each ministry is a different expression of the baptismal vocation to holiness, which each person within the Church shares in. I will come back to that this evening because it's an important

point for your community. But we need to understand this as one of the elements of the mission of the Church, and it's particularly evident in the charism of the Emmanuel Community. But you see, because the Church is on service, she is a minister.

- A fourth and final point. To say that the Church is a ministry reveals that she does not understand herself simply as one religion among others. Religions are often preoccupied with success, they need to make sure that they do not lose members. But a ministry is not focussed on a list, it does not exist for itself. Rather, its only concern is to serve the love of God for the world, and ensure that the love of God for the world succeeds. And so, because the Church is a ministry, we can't reduce her to what people outside the Church say about her. They say she is a religion, but that is not all that she is. This is what makes it difficult for the Church in secular countries. In these countries, we speak about interreligious dialogue. We place all of the religions on the same level, around the same table, and we're happy to accept them all so long as they remain in the private sphere. But the Church is not at ease in such a situation because she knows that she is not simply a religion. By the way, it wasn't until the fourth century that the followers of 'The Way' allowed themselves to be called a religion. Up to that point, the word 'religion' was only used to refer to the way in which the pagans interacted with their gods. The Church took a lot of time, and begrudgingly accepted to be called a religion, she never gave herself this title. Also, the Church knows from experience that God is not closer to the religious people than to secular people or agnostics, or even atheists; rather he is close to all men. This is why the Church is not at ease when the secular leaders call upon the opinions of different religions and include the Church in this discussion. Paul VI reflected on this in *Ecclesiam Suam*, and Benedict XVI reminded us of this in Assisi. He said, if you remain with the religions, you've only done half of the work. God is not closer to religious people than to secular people. Sadly, the Church also knows from experience that it is sometimes possible to have a religious way of life that seeks to have all the answers without having experienced in truth the reality of life because this approach thinks it has all of the answers before even knowing what the questions are. Such a religion does not lead to God but becomes an obstacle to Him. In order to reveal to us who He really is, God became man, to experience our own life. He lived 30 years, 'wasted' his life for 30 years before commencing his public ministry in order to experience our life with its questions, doubts and difficulties. It's no trivial thing to be a religion of the incarnation! So the Church understands that the scribes and doctors of the law might seem all polished and shiny, but this is because they have the answers to questions that people don't even ask, and this does not bring them closer to God, but rather takes them further away from Him. Lots of our contemporaries are disgusted by religions, and their haughty, moralistic values. So they seek answers to the most important existential questions in other places, like culture, art, literature, and all sorts of things. But we know that seeing as the Church is at the service of humanity, she is a ministry. And being a ministry, she cannot be reduced to a religion. It is sometimes difficult for the Church to accept this, but it is the truth. Karl Barth, the great protestant theologian talked a lot about this, which allowed Catholic and protestant theologies to deepen their understanding of this point.

We can come back to this word of service again tonight. To finish with this word, I would like to look at how Pope Francis talks about it. For him, service is closely linked with loving people by being close to them. The Church's role is to serve this relationship of love. This means that

above all she must be close to God and to people. By being close to God, she is able to know what God has done to reveal himself to man, and pass this on to others. Have a look for example at the book of Deuteronomy: "For what great nation is there that has gods so close to it as the Lord, our God, is to us whenever we call upon him?" Seek me! You will know that it is me because there is no one like god who is closer to you than I am. Proximity is the unique and defining quality of God's revelation. The Church has to adjust her mission to the way in which she professes that God reveals himself. It's very profound, there's a profound relationship between revelation and mission, which St. Paul VI, among others, really lived. So the Church must try to readjust her mission to fit with her doctrine on the way in which God has revealed Himself, and it is by being close, in an intimate relationship with Him that she can do this. When I was listening to you yesterday I was reflecting on the fact that for some people, there are so many difficulties in life that it seems that God must be really far away. But when this is the case, we can guess that He is in reality close to us not by theories, but by the closeness of other people, who bring God to us. That's what Pope Francis talks about in many of his writings and actions. That was my first point, the word service.

Onto my second point, the second word that sums up the mission of the Church is cooperation. With service, you can discover what the mission of the Church is by reflecting on the idea of service that God has given us. You want to think through and understand what the mission is. Mission is learning to cooperate with the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is the source of the mission, the one who starts everything off. In the Acts of the Apostles, the main character, the one who starts everything off is not the Apostles but the Holy Spirit. You should know, you are charismatic, not only because the program for this afternoon's session hasn't yet been decided on and announced. In any case, you know from experience, and we know that the Church struggles and loses her way very quickly when she tries to take the place of the Holy Spirit and be the origin for her own mission. The Apostles recognised very quickly that it was the Lord who was adding each day to the community of those who were saved, and that this was not happening by their own efforts and attempts to persuade people. This is very important. It means that the mission of the Church rests on the experience of expansion. By the way, this was the word that was used by the fathers of the Church before we started to use the word 'mission.' This was at a time when the mission referred mostly to people who travelled a long way to announce the Gospel to others. But at the start of this experience of expansion is the action of the Holy Spirit, not a human attempt at persuasion. I have a few things to say to unpack this.

What I just said was my first point on this word. I had four points, so now I have three left on the word cooperation. The first observation was that the Holy Spirit is the first actor and the origin of the mission. We can say that He is responsible for the mission, and you, the Church, must learn to cooperate with Him. I really mean learn, because we have never finished learning to cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

My second observation is that despite this the Holy Spirit also needs the Church. But it's important not to take this sentence out of context. What this means is that the Holy Spirit can do everything except replace the witness of Christ. Obviously it's the Holy Spirit who forms and brings forth witnesses to Christ, but the Holy Spirit needs flesh and blood witnesses who can cooperate with Him. To witness to Cornelius, the Holy Spirit needed Peter, and to witness to Paul, He needed Ananias and it's the same in so many situations. So, the Holy Spirit needs a Church of witnesses. St. Irenaeus and other Fathers of the Church also spoke about this.

St. Irenaeus speaks about the mission as God's mission. God is the one who is at work. But Irenaeus says that the Father accomplishes all of this with his two hands, which are the Son and the Spirit. And so it's fundamentally the Trinity who works in the world. And so the Father works with his two hands, the hand of the Spirit who precedes him, who like the wind blows where He will. The Spirit accompanies the other hand, the Son, who gave his life as a ransom for the multitude. But there must be witnesses of the Son who can cooperate with the Spirit. There you have it my friends, a people of witnesses who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, a people who is not afraid to confess this even under threat of death. And their primary goal is not to simply get other people to subscribe to Christ's teaching, but to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. So you see, cooperation is the art of mission. We have to cooperate with the Holy Spirit, who needs witnesses of the risen Christ.

Third observation. It is the Holy Spirit who directs the Church's mission, not the other way around. This is very important! We're not the ones who tell the Holy Spirit where he needs to go and how he needs to act, rather it's Him who says "now you must go to Macedonia, you are not going to stay here." It is Him who speaks to the Church, who pushes the Church, who sends the Church, who attracts the Church. The Church needs to put her plan for evangelisation back in her pocket. That is the mission of the Church, learning to understand the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit prepares this mission, He precedes the Church. I really like how John Paul II used to kneel down and kiss the ground when he arrived in a new country as a way of recognising that the Holy Spirit's work in the country precedes that of the first missionaries who came. Even before you come along to testify to Christ, the Holy Spirit was preparing the way. So we can't think 'lucky that I'm here, what would happen without me...'. Yes, it is important that you are here, but in your place. The Holy Spirit has already been working in this place. Your role is often to spend a lot of time trying to find the traces of the action of the Holy Spirit in this place that He has called you to be. And sometimes in the lives of the people we're called to witness to, it takes time to uncover the traces of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit. On this note, there are two short phrases from the magisterium that we should remember. Firstly, from *Gaudium et Spes*, paragraph 22: "we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery." The Holy Spirit offers to every person a way in which to be associated with the paschal mystery. God alone knows how this is offered to each person, and we must seek to understand how he is doing this in the lives of the people we meet. Being associated with the paschal mystery means being humbled and raised up, dying and coming back to life. How many times do we go home at night and say "Today I saw someone who doesn't know Christ, but still I saw the power of His resurrection at work in their life. Even though they don't know Him, He is there, holding them up, allowing them to hope." And in your own life you know the traces of the paschal mystery. You have learnt to pray as a result of the paschal mystery and you seek to help others to do the same. The other quote from the magisterium (there are many others, but the one that I would like to bring to your attention) is from Jean Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, paragraph 28. It was published on the 7th of December 1990, while the one we already read from *Gaudium et Spes* was from the 7th of December 1965. So on the 7th of December 1990, Jean Paul II wrote: "The Spirit's presence and activity affect not only the individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions." I'll repeat that, it's from *Redemptoris Missio* paragraph 28, published on the 7th of December 1990: "The Spirit's presence and activity affect not only the individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions." So my friends, that means that we can never say that we have finished our search. So go! Go and seek, and learn, and never

say to yourself that it's not working. Seek His presence, learn to cooperate with Him!! He's the one who helps us to see where he's leading us, to see His action, and He prepares the ground for us. He is present, He simply asks that we be witnesses to Christ. And when we do that, and we spend time with people, we end up seeing the traces of the Holy Spirit at work, and one day, if it's God's will, you will find the words to say to your Cornelius: "the one whom you are seeking is Jesus Christ, the one who is working in your life is the Spirit of Jesus Christ." You will see conversions. And what is conversion? Conversion happens when witnesses to Christ pray, and this prayer is able to act in the lives of those who seek without knowing what they seek. And you can be sure that the Holy Spirit is already at work in the heart of the person that you are talking to. He has prepared the lock in order to adjust it to the key: "I stand at the door and I knock" says the Lord "if you open your heart to me, I will come and make my home in you." You arrive with the key and you say: "there we go, I did it, it opened." But no silly, it's the Holy Spirit who prepared the lock, you are happy because the door opened, but that's why the Holy Spirit always has the keys. You brought the key, but it was the Holy Spirit who prepared the lock. None of it would have worked if the Holy Spirit had not been intimately involved. So that's my third observation.

The fourth observation is that there comes a moment when this cooperation with the Holy Spirit is so strong that the Church feels comfortable and is able to make decisions, to decide on which direction to take, and the first time that this happened, you know it, is the famous council of Jerusalem. That's what the councils are for, because we need to come to a point where the Church can say: "The Holy Spirit and ourselves have decided that..." So we see that the Church's authority does not come from her own merits, either from what she did at Jerusalem or anywhere else. Rather, she receives this mission and authority by grace, by the grace of being called to cooperate in the salvation of the entire human race. That is the grace she has received, she has been called not by her own merits, but by a free gift from God, who called her to cooperate in the salvation of all of mankind. And so, the Church must be able to say: "The Holy Spirit said, we have decided that..." That's why there are councils, and it's also why you are here, because you also have some decisions to make. I would like to finish this second point with what Pope Francis has to say on this subject. The word that I talked about in this section was cooperation, and another word that goes with it is synodality, that is to say conversation in the Holy Spirit. That's why Pope Francis is always coming back to the intuitions of his predecessors, so that the Church might live synodality. Synodality is not a concept, we don't learn it through ideas, books and lessons, but rather we learn it by practising it. When I was in the diocese of Marseille, when we had the diocesan phase of the synod, I said to the people of the diocese "listen. Don't be deceived. The synod is worth much more than simply the word. So live it, and live it in each stage of the life of the Church. It's not worth the effort to criticise the way the synods run in Rome if we aren't capable of having a small local council for a parish or a sector. Synodality is learnt by practising it at this level, it isn't learnt through ideas. But you see, that's it, synodality is our way of cooperating with the Holy Spirit, and thus accomplishing the Church's mission.

To recap:

- Firstly: if you want to understand the Church's mission, it is to serve the relationship between God and the world. We spoke about this already
- Secondly, the mission of the Church is to learn to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. We spoke about this too.
- Thirdly: the mission of the Church is a vocation.

On this third point I also have four observations. Firstly, I understand the word vocation to be something dynamic, not something unmoving and static. Strictly speaking, we can't say that we have perceived something new. We make choices in an attempt to respond to a call that we have perceived, but we won't know our vocation until the end. Your vocation is something dynamic, it's not simply a label. We choose a state of life, and we discover at the end of the journey what our vocation really was, but we don't discover that until the end. A very important Bible verse for me is from the Book of Revelation 2:17: "To everyone who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it." This goes with Isaiah 49:16: "Behold, I have graven you [your name] on the palms of my hands." These words from the Bible tell us that when you understand the way that the Father looks on you, you will look back on your life and understand your vocation. You will see what God was able to make by patiently stitching together your freedom and His grace. André Louf used to say that with the destruction of the masterpieces of St. Therese: we don't yet know what God did with that. Of course, you make choices in your life, you decide on a state of life, and you try to conform yourself to this state of life, you work on living in a way that is coherent. St. Gregory of Nyssa used to say: "we are created in the image and likeness of God. The image remains always", no matter what we do, we are still created in the image of God, but we can always work on the likeness, on being more like God. There are some people who have spent long periods of their life not living in the likeness of God. Being more like God, in his likeness is something we can always work on. But that's it, you will only discover your vocation by looking at your life as the Father does, you will look back on your life and you will understand what God has done with what you gave Him. That's a saying that we can hold on to for our whole lives, let God do what He wants to with what you have given him. And if you have consecrated yourself to Him, you have given Him your life. So let Him do what He wants. Don't try to predict what will happen, don't resist, just let Him do what He wants with what you have given Him. Christian de Chergé meditated a lot on this point of letting God do what He wants with us. You need to be aware that to give your life to God as a witness to Him also means giving your life to Him to be a martyr. I was given the grace to hold in my hands St. Charles de Foucauld's breviary, and he wrote in the corner of one page something that he also wrote in his journal in Nazareth: "think to yourself that you must die as a martyr, and desire that that should be today." That's written in the first page of his breviary, so it gives you an idea of his state of mind. So the Church's mission is a vocation, but only if we understand it as a dynamic, not a static thing.

Second observation: so what is the vocation of the Church? It is to work in her place, in a way that God only knows to accomplish the promise that God made to Abraham. We cannot understand the mission of the Church properly if we don't situate it in the context of the promise. God promised Abraham: "by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves," a day will come when all the world will come to Jerusalem. Abraham did what he could, he didn't understand, but he believed. In the same way, the mission of the Church, the vocation of the Church is to contribute in a way that only God knows to the accomplishment of this promise. I would like to remind you of something very important that explains the fundamental relationship between the Church and the Jewish people, which we should never forget. If you want to understand the Church's mission, you should reflect on the spiritual links that unite the Jewish people and the Church, founded by Christ. If you need to be convinced of this, I would ask you to look at the history of the convocation of the second Vatican Council. Just a few months before the start of the council, on the 19th of June 1960, Pope St. John XXIII met with

Jules Isaac [a well known Jewish historian]. Even though none of the commissions who were preparing the council had thought it was a good idea for the council to work on the relationship between the Church and the Jewish people, and even though the world had only just come out of the Shoah, John XXIII, by this meeting demanded that the Church work to understand her relationship to Judaism better. This is probably partly because in his own life, John XXIII worked to save some Jewish families during the war in Istanbul and Sofia. It was John XXIII who understood that for the Church to grow in her understanding of herself, she needed to understand the nature of her link to the chosen people. As a result of this meeting, Jean XXIII asked Cardinal Bea, the great German exegete who did a lot of things in the council, to work on this, and from this work came the council document *Nostra Aetate*, and more importantly several paragraphs in *Dei Verbum* and *Lumen Gentium*. Something that is fundamental for the Church, but that is also difficult and requires a conversion on our part is the fact that the Bible is a collection of books. Often throughout the history of the Church, we have been tempted to neglect the old (first) testament because we think we have all of the essential stuff in the new teaching of Christ. The first person to adopt this way of thinking was Marcion, and his teachings were condemned in 144 BC. He said that it wasn't worth keeping the old (first) testament because it was full of Jewish stuff that we don't need any more. He even went as far as to say that there are some things in the Gospels that we don't need. He was condemned in 144 BC, but Marcionism is like a bacillus virus at the end of the Albert Camus novel. It doesn't die and it regularly reawakens. And yet there is something fundamental here; our Bibles are a collection of books. A Christian can never understand his identity without making reference to other realities, notably the promises of the old testament, which constitute a part of his identity. We were talking last night with Joseph and Joyce, and even where they are from in China and Vietnam, they need the old (first) testament. Not because Judaism is an important part of their society, but because it is essential to the identity of the Church, or more precisely, a link to another identity which helps constitute the Church. As we discussed, the mission of the Church is to work in a way that only God knows for the accomplishment of the promise, but God's mission also counts on the Jewish people in a different way. The Jews are not asked to go out and make everyone in the world Jewish, they are simply asked to believe in the promise. They are asked to live out this promise in their ordinary lives by living the 613 precepts. By living these, they proclaim their faith in the promise. The mission of the Jewish people continues and will continue until the end of time thanks to this promise. The Christian faith is grafted onto this faith in the promise. St. Paul talks about this. He remained attached to his Jewish faith, and onto this faith and this mission of the Jewish people, Christ grafted the new mission of Christianity. God never said to the Jewish people: "go and make the whole world Jewish," but we are asked to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." But this commandment of mission does not take away the mission of the Jewish people; God does not take back his gifts. For this understanding, we owe a lot to John XXIII and John Paul II. We can look back to the speech John Paul II gave in Mayence not long after his election in 1980, and then the speech he gave in April 1986 at the great synagogue of Rome. There are also many other examples. We owe this understanding to John Paul II for whom this was a fundamental intuition that he expressed in several encyclicals. He said: "We Christians can believe that all authentic prayer is inspired by the Holy Spirit, whatever the words that are used." And that comes from our awareness that the Jewish people continues to play a role in the mission of the Church. But we need to be clear. We're almost at the end. The second observation that I made was this link with the promise, which is very important. It's important because sometimes I see brothers and sisters who are tired because they have forgotten the promise. They are tired because

they reduce the mission to a simple matter of efficiency of their actions, as if there was no promise. They act as if for the mission to be done well all I need to do is ensure that my time is filled and I have done this and that, and so they become very tired. It's true that you are needed, and it's a delicate thing, but we need to keep in mind God's promise.

Third consideration: How is this vocation of the Church expressed? I was very touched by something that Joseph Ratzinger wrote, that I would like to share with you to help us to understand the mission of the Church. He wrote in one of his books: "the mission of the Church consists in accompanying God as he walks towards the people of the world." He continued: "the rejection of this message means that the Church does not have a homeland, and her mission consists in accompanying God as he walks towards the people of the world." There is a lot in this short sentence. We shouldn't ever forget that people reject God's message, we see it a lot today. The Church doesn't have a homeland or a mother country, it's an international reality today. At the same time she accompanies God as he moves towards the people of the world. You see it's another reminder for the Church to turn outwards and not be self-centred.

My fourth and final observation is to remind you of the four things that are said about the vocation of the Church in the creed. She has a vocation to be holy, to be one, to be apostolic and to be Catholic. One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. It seems to me that as important as the holiness, unity and apostolicity of the Church are, at this time in history, we need to rediscover what it means to say that the Church's vocation is to be Catholic. That's because we often understand Catholicism simply as a label. It means that I'm Catholic and not protestant. But it's so much more than that! It's an expression of the vocation of the Church. And so we need to work to help the Catholics change their way of life, and live this vocation of the Church to be Catholic. And it is this aspect (being Catholic) which expresses the work of the Church which is present everywhere. This notion of universality, that's what being Catholic means for the Church. But this Catholicity, universality has not yet been accomplished, meaning that the Church, in this sense, is not yet Catholic. So being Catholic is not a label, it's a vocation, something to work on, and it's up to you. It's a task for us, and for you, the Emmanuel Community (we'll come back to this in the evening), are you as a community helping the Church in her conversion, in her attempt to live her vocation to be Catholic. To go further on this point, we could read the beautiful reflections that St. Pope Paul VI wrote during his visit to Bombay, during the Second Vatican Council in 1964, where he invited the Church to be catholic, universal. The Church is not linked to a particular civilisation, She still has many things to discover. We can come back to this. And now a word from Pope Francis. We matched up proximity with service, synodality with cooperation, and for vocation, I would like to bring it together with the word fraternity. That's a word that the pope uses a lot. Fraternity is the way in which the Church accomplishes her vocation of Catholicity, and that's what the pope wanted to do in Abu Dhabi.

I'm really finishing up now. To conclude, I hope you're not too annoyed that we took a bit of a step back from the questions that are important for us to answer right now to look at the vocation of the Church more generally. The mission of the Church is to serve the relationship of love between God and the world, which requires the Church to ensure she is not self-centred, among other things. The mission of the Church is to cooperate with the Holy Spirit, the two hands of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. She must be a Church of witnesses. And the mission of the Church is to accomplish her vocation to be one, Holy, Catholic and apostolic.

And then we mentioned the words proximity, synodality and fraternity to match up with each of these three parts of her mission. To conclude, one word that the council used a lot to summarise all of that is the word sacrament. The council said that in a certain sense, the Church is the universal sacrament of salvation. *Lumen Gentium*, paragraph 1 explains this further: "the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race." In order to understand the mission of the Church, you need to say to yourself that it is a mystery, since it is a sacrament. The Church is a sacrament of salvation, a universal sacrament. You need to understand your vocation of Catholicism in its proper sense, universal sacrament of salvation, that is the sign and the instrument of salvation. The sign means that salvation is beyond simply the Church as it is today. The instrument of salvation means that the Church needs you. The sign and the instrument of the intimate union of man with God. And so we are called to go out and approach others. Only by being close to them will you discover the different ways in which the intimate union of God and man manifests itself. This union with God is present even in the most difficult things that happen in life. We need to hope in this intimate union and seek the traces of the Holy Spirit and of the unity of all of humanity. Never resign yourself to say "ah no, this place is for buddhists." No! You confess that Jesus is the saviour of the world, and that requires a conversion for them (and for you). Universal sacrament of salvation, sign and instrument of the intimate union between God and man, and the unity of all humanity. There you have it, a few general reflections on what we call the mission of the Church. You see that it's an extremely broad and rich topic and this evening, all going well, I'll try to put that more into context with what you are in the middle of living.