



THE ART OF ACCOMPANIMENT

Three key documents

- **Evangelii Gaudium– November 2013**
 - The Joy of the Gospel
- **Misericordiae Vultus – April 2015**
 - The Face of Mercy
- **Amoris Laetitia – March 2016**
 - The Joy of Love

The Joy of the Gospel

- ‘I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ...’
- The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms.

(EG 3)

God is a God of *Love*...

“... when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved.”

(EG 6)

“The life of the Church should always reveal clearly that God takes the initiative, that “he has loved us first”

(EG 12)

God is a God of *Joy*...

“There are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter....

... I understand the grief of people who have to endure great suffering, yet slowly but surely we all have to let the joy of faith slowly revive as a quiet yet firm trust, even amid the greatest distress...”

God is a God of *Mercy*...

“How good it feels to come back to him whenever we are lost! Let me say this once more: God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy.

Christ, who told us to forgive one another “seventy times seven” has given us his example: he has forgiven us seventy times seven. Time and time again he bears us on his shoulders.”

What do we mean by “mercy”?



'Mercy' in the Old Testament

- 'Hesed'

- "Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life..."
- (Psalm 22)

- 'Raham'

- "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!"
- (Isaiah 49:15)

'Mercy' in the Old Testament



“I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt, and I have heard their cry...

I know their sufferings, and I have *come down* to deliver them...”

(Ex. 3:7-8)

Mercy in the New Testament

- *“The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me... He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour...”*

- (Luke 4 16 – 22)



A Hymn of Mercy – The Magnificat



“He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his mercy – according to the promise he made to our ancestors – of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.”

A Hymn of Mercy – the Benedictus

And you, little child, you shall be called Prophet of the Most High...

To give his people knowledge of salvation... by the tender mercy of our God.



God's mercy in action



Being sent
Good News
Liberty
Sight to the blind



Exalt the lowly
Feed the hungry
Come to help



Come to rescue
Free from fear
Forgive sins



The Good News

- The Church's first duty is not to hand down condemnations or anathemas.
- It's not all about rubrics and Canon Law.
- **It is to proclaim God's mercy in Jesus' name**

'Mercy' has to be concrete



- “... the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with which he reveals his love as that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child.” (MV 6)

How to proclaim the Good News



- The Church will have to initiate everyone—priests, religious and laity—into this ‘art of accompaniment’ which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (EG 169)

What does 'accompaniment' mean to you?

- What words or images come into your head when you hear the word 'accompaniment'?
- Can you think of any time in your life when you felt the need of someone to 'accompany' you?
 - Did anyone come along at just the right moment?
 - Was there somebody who was always 'there for you'?
 - How would you describe that person?
 - What difference did they make in your life?

Following the Example of Jesus



How does Jesus 'accompany' these disciples?

Listening

- We need to practise the art of listening, which is more than simply hearing... Listening helps us to find the right gesture and word which shows that we are more than simply bystanders. (EG 171)
- Moved by [Jesus'] example, we want to enter fully into the fabric of society, sharing the lives of all, listening to their concerns... rejoicing with those who rejoice, weeping with those who weep... (EG 269)

Not rushing to judgement

- ... the Church must be particularly concerned to offer understanding, comfort and acceptance.... Rather than offering the healing power of grace and the light of the Gospel message, some would “indoctrinate” that message, turning it into “dead stones to be hurled at others” (AL 49)

Not rushing to judgement

- For this reason, a pastor cannot feel that it is enough simply to apply moral laws to those living in “irregular” situations, as if they were stones to throw at people’s lives. This would bespeak the closed heart of one used to hiding behind the Church’s teachings, “sitting on the chair of Moses and judging at times with superiority and superficiality difficult cases and wounded families” (AL 305)

The Nature of Accompaniment'

- One who accompanies others has to realize that each person's situation before God and their life in grace are mysteries which no one can fully know from without... Our personal experience of being accompanied and assisted, and of openness to those who accompany us, will teach us to be patient and compassionate with others, and to find the right way to gain their trust, their openness and their readiness to grow. (EG 172)

Satnavs Or Maps?



We... find it hard to make room for the consciences of the faithful, who very often respond as best as they can to the Gospel amid their limitations, and are capable of carrying out their own discernment in complex situations. We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them

Closing Prayer

All: Your ways, Lord, are faithfulness and love for those who keep your covenant.

Reader: Lord, make me know your ways.
Lord, teach me your paths.
Make me walk in your truth, and teach me:
for you are God my saviour.

All: Your ways, Lord, are faithfulness and love for those who keep your covenant.

Reader: Remember your mercy, Lord,
and the love you have shown from
of old.

In your love remember me.

because of your goodness, O Lord.

**All: Your ways, Lord, are faithfulness
and love for those who keep your
covenant.**

Reader: The Lord is good and upright.
He shows the path to those who
stray,
He guides the humble in the right
path,
He teaches his way to the poor.

**All: Your ways, Lord, are faithfulness
and love for those who keep
your covenant.**

Glory be...