

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Lectionary: 102

Reading 1 - [Isaiah 66:10-14c](#)

Thus says the LORD: Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad because of her, all you who love her; exult, exult with her, all you who were mourning over her! Oh, that you may suck fully of the milk of her comfort, that you may nurse with delight at her abundant breasts! For thus says the LORD: Lo, I will spread prosperity over Jerusalem like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing torrent. As nurslings, you shall be carried in her arms, and fondled in her lap; as a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; in Jerusalem you shall find your comfort.

When you see this, your heart shall rejoice and your bodies flourish like the grass; the LORD's power shall be known to his servants.

Responsorial Psalm - [Psalm 66:1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 16, 20](#) R. (1) Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

Reading 2 - [Galatians 6:14-18](#)

Brothers and sisters: May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither does circumcision mean anything, nor does uncircumcision, but only a new creation. Peace and mercy be to all who follow this rule and to the Israel of God. From now on, let no one make troubles for me; for I bear the marks of Jesus on my body. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

Gospel - [Luke 10:1-12, 17-20](#)

At that time the Lord appointed seventy-two others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this household.' If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you, for the laborer deserves his payment. Do not move about from one house to another. Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you, cure the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God is at hand for you.' Whatever town you enter and they do not receive you, go out into the streets and say, 'The dust of your town that clings to our feet, even that we shake off against you.' Yet know this: the kingdom of God is at hand. I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom on that day than for that town."

The seventy-two returned rejoicing, and said, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us because of your name." Jesus said, "I have observed Satan fall like lightning from the sky. Behold, I have given you the power to 'tread upon serpents' and scorpions and upon the full force of the enemy and nothing will harm you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

Evangelization: Team Jesus

The statement ‘Evangelization is a team sport’ highlights a key aspect of the Church's mission: it is a collective endeavor, even as we actively participate according to the circumstances of our individual lives and the uniqueness of our gifts. Sport is based on a starting point of cooperation and agreement about the constitutive rules. So too our team, the Church. The words and actions of Jesus in the Gospel reading today tell us a few things about being on his team.

There are key elements¹ of a mission minded team of evangelists, a parish united as missionary disciples. The first is a clear, compelling, inspiring mission and vision that is the indispensable guiding light and foundation of purpose. Championship teams are built on a foundation of a clear and inspiring Mission. Championship cultures have a clear and compelling vision, passionate purpose driving the culture. They are singularly focused on the goal, achieving it through well-defined tasks and priorities with uncompromising fidelity to their purpose. The vision is compelling, one they are innately drawn to, passionately yearn for, and are willing to make sacrifices to achieve. They are so completely one with the vision that it impels them on a daily basis as the mission demands and with their hearts and minds set like flint on their purpose, they, fueled by grace, maintain their commitment. The vision of Christ is spiritually enfleshed in the Church and collectively assented to by the members. It excites them. It provides them with authentically human meaning and purpose for every action. The cause of Christ is the cause of his disciples, who rally around it and sprint into the world to call others to his banner.

We might say that God the Father is the team owner, Jesus is the manager, the Holy Spirit unites and animates the team, and the Pope is the Coach. The Bishops are the assistant coaches and the Priests are the team captains. The ‘game’ is what we call our mission, the mission of Jesus, and the mission of Jesus has a Church. The Gospel is not only for our private edification or pleasure. It bears the seeds of saving truth that we are called to spread. But we are spreading the Gospel truth and those truths as interpreted by the Church. We are not promoting our personal agenda, our truth. There are also many ways in which participants on a sport team need to cooperate just to make the game possible to be played. The unity of the Church, our communion empowers us to take up our individual positions on the field and to play with one heart and mind. The mission is immediate and urgent; there is nothing more important than sharing the Good News and we are sent by the coach onto the playing field of the world, warned to be focused on the mission, to engage according to the way of Christ.²

Charles Spurgeon was a very famous Baptist preacher in England during the latter half of the 19th century. He was firmly anti-Catholic and definitely not a ‘team player’, though he was a very strong leader. He also had a boldness, he wasn’t shy to speak uncomfortable truths, such as *“Every Christian is either a missionary or an impostor”* in a 1873 sermon entitled “A Sermon and a Reminiscence”. At length he said;

Once more, he who really has this high estimate of Jesus will think much of him, and as the thoughts are sure to run over at the mouth, he will talk much of him. Do we so?

If Jesus is precious to you, you will not be able to keep your good news to yourself; you will be whispering it into your child’s ear; you will be telling it to your husband; you will be earnestly imparting it to your friend; without the charms of eloquence you will be more than eloquent; your heart will speak, and your eyes will flash as you talk of his sweet love.

Every Christian here is either a missionary or an impostor. Recollect that. You either try to spread abroad the kingdom of Christ, or else you do not love him at all. It cannot be that there is a high appreciation of Jesus and a totally silent tongue

¹ Portions of this book have been used to help make the analogy between the development of champion sport teams and the nature of missionary discipleship. Jeff Janssen *How to Build and Sustain a Championship Culture*, 2014

² <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2018/06/01/180601b.html>

about him. Of course I do not mean by that, that those who use the pen are silent: they are not. And those who help others to use the tongue, or spread that which others have written, are doing their part well: but that man who says, "I believe in Jesus," but does not think enough of Jesus ever to tell another about him, by mouth, or pen, or tract, is an impostor.

You are either doing good, or you are not good yourself. If thou knowest Christ, thou art as one that has found honey; thou wilt call others to taste of it; thou art like the lepers who found the food which the Syrians had cast away: thou wilt go to Samaria and tell the hungry crowd that thou hast found Jesus, and art anxious that they should find him too.

Be wise in your generation and speak of him in fitting ways and at fitting times, and so in every place proclaim the fact that Jesus is most precious to your soul.³

Though Mr. Spurgeon held and taught a good amount of error, he hit the nail on the head in that sermon. This resonates with Catholic teachings for these reasons:

- The Great Commission: Jesus instructed his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you". This is often viewed as the basis of the Christian mission.
- Being a Disciple: Being a Christian involves more than belief; it involves following Jesus and becoming like him. This includes sharing his message and living his teachings.
- Different Roles, One Goal: Just as a team has varied roles, Christians have different ways to participate in the mission. Some may be full-time missionaries, while others contribute through prayer, financial support, community service, and acts of kindness.

There ought to be no doubt among all God's children, being a Christian requires active participation, not just passive belief. Building any team implies a purpose and intended action. Similarly, being a Christian implies a call to join God's mission. Just as a team comes together to compete, Christians come together to spread the gospel and demonstrate God's salvific love.

The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few... If the apostles had truly understood that the mission field was the whole world they would certainly have wondered how they could fulfill the mission. They may even have wondered how it would be possible in their own corner of the world among the Jews. Yet, by the grace of God, the clarity of their purpose, and the unity of their hearts and minds, they clearly did not work in vain. It is estimated that there were 7,000 to 10,000 Christians in the Roman Empire by the time the last apostle died at the end of the first century.⁴ Today, there are approximately 2.6 billion Christians in the world. Among the things they did learn from spending three years in community with Jesus, was that they were a community bound together by Jesus and that it was together that they would go to all nations sharing the 'Good News'.

This brings us to another key element, which is credible and powerful leadership. With the descent of the Holy Spirit and firmly rejoicing under the banner of their King, the apostles and early disciples were the primary creators, champions, and sustainers of the team. They were the pivotal foundations for the team's success. They embraced the mission, reveled in its challenges. They were not afraid to be honest and truthful. They instilled confidence and gained the spiritual maturity to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit finding the solution to challenges. They, like Christ, engaged in blunt communication and demanded accountability creating an environment where every team member could thrive.

They were the first and potentially most critical component of developing a culture of victory in the nascent Church. Just as in a championship sports program, there is one primary leader who is the key catalyst and coordinator of all the multi-layered leadership efforts. For the Church, as we celebrated last weekend, the first coach was St. Peter. Christ positioned him to have this kind of influence and impact. He and his team of assistant coaches set the tone for the Church just as a Coach and his assistants set the program by

³ <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/a-sermon-and-a-reminiscence/#flipbook/>

⁴ Rodney Stark, 1996, *The Rise of Christianity*

designing, developing, and driving the culture through the rest of the team. Whether in the form of a coach, athletic director, team captain, school president, military commander, teacher, principal, or CEO, building a Championship Culture / a culture of victory starts at the top. The team captains especially play a critical role in molding, monitoring, and maintaining the culture of the team. They exert a continual influence on their teammates of what is acceptable and unacceptable.

The Church is not like a club or other kind of social organization; it is never a loose affiliation of solitary individuals. It is more like a team. Teams are necessarily constituted by individuals but, unless the entire team coalesces and works together as a community, they will not be able to achieve the goal of champion. So too the Church, it is always a *communio* of brothers and sisters who put on the mind of Christ and run the race together so as to win. Individuals who give their hearts to Christ do not remain alone; they are simultaneously constituted into the mystical body of Christ. Having been drawn into the divine life of God through baptism, God became their Father, and all the members of the community of the Church became their brothers and sisters, one family, one team.⁵ They have a new identity.

Having a team identity is the next key element. Building a championship team involves more than just assembling talented individuals; it requires building a meaningful team identity. If you don't know who you are on the team, it's impossible to know how to show up day after day. Your identity on team Jesus rises from your new life in Christ, and the corporate identity of Team Jesus defines how you make decisions and makes reviewing success and failures much easier. Everyone on 'team Jesus' becomes established in the team personality defined by him. A personality that guides the behavior of the team, all its decisions. The team is value driven, has a strong moral foundation. Having put on the mind of Christ the team knows how they should think, act, and feel in every situation and is able to maintain unity during the most challenging of times.

A solid champion sport team has core values that are the bedrock principles that support the victory culture. Unshakeable bedrock principles that the team believes are absolutely foundational to success. They are what the Church definitively values and stands for - no matter what the situation. These nonnegotiable, sacred values define the essence of your identity and are expected to be shared by everyone because they are central. Speaking of this in a team context, North Carolina women's soccer coach Anson Dorrance said, *"People who make a living from studying what makes organizations excellent usually boil their consistent success down to the group living a powerful set of Core Values. There are certain principles of behavior that produce extraordinary results. Every year when I meet with the rising seniors each week in the spring our discussions center around our Core Values and what they can do to live them and how they can help drive everyone within the culture to live them as well."*

The biblical call to unity in the body of Christ, identified as members of the mystical body of Christ, must be marked by humility, patience, and forbearance, which will require a growth in holiness that 'lone ranger' Christians cannot achieve. This new person in Christ acquires a deep sense of both God's transcendence and immanence, of the God who constantly calls us beyond where we are and who, at the same time, deeply penetrates our being and our every experience. This new person strives to live a life of perfect integrity and truth, a life of deep compassion and concern. We need each other to pursue holiness of life. Our Easter liturgical prayers underscore the fact that we are a community of believers. While each one of us is called to develop a personal relationship with the Lord, we must support one another in that journey toward Christ. We need one another to live a fruitful and authentic Catholic life. We all need the structure of spiritual authority that the church provides, and the church provides the sphere in which to live out the gospel in relationship with other believers.

⁵ 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 12:27

That is the next key element, team life. The life of the members of a champion team with a culture of victory is marked by honest, open, and clear communication. This is the lifeblood of successful teams. Clear communication fosters understanding, minimizes misunderstandings, and strengthens the bond between team members. Jesus made a lot of people uncomfortable, especially those on the team. But team players with a victory mindset don't shrink away from hard truth, tough love, purifying crucibles. Learning how to sit down with another athlete or coach can double team performance overnight and reduces team drama 10-fold.

Conflict is inevitable on every team, and although team Jesus ought to experience less internal conflict, it happens – we're not perfect yet. How we manage that conflict will determine our resilience. Thank God for the Sacraments, especially reconciliation! That won't be enough. We still need solid conflict resolution strategies to address issues promptly and maintain a positive team dynamic. Which leads us to mention the importance of constant reminders about the standards of behavior for this team, which are rooted in our core values. These Standards revolve around the specific actions expected of each team member in a variety of contexts. The Standards of Behavior, in essence, are the daily choices and actions that either maximize (support) or minimize (undermine) the chances of your Vision becoming a reality - and your Values being practiced and upheld. Sound familiar? There should also be vigorous effort to protect the high standards, to guard against softening over time, to combat efforts to subvert them. And once again, everyone on the team ought to fully embrace them because they are necessary for high-level success. The high Standards are seen as an edge and as important differentiators in outworking, out-training, and out-competing your main opponents – team fallen angels. Duke men's basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski says it best when he talks about the importance of establishing and embracing standards in a program. *“A major part of becoming a team is the establishment and collective acceptance of your standards, based on your team's makeup and centered on your unique goal. Once a group of individuals formulates and agrees to their standards, they become united, single-minded in purpose.”*

Another key element is team formation, which is essential for team life to be lived according to the team identity and ordered to the mission / vision as it is defined by the leadership. Cultures of victory for championship teams consist of energized and engaged team members who fully embrace the Vision, Values, and Standards of the culture. They take pride in being a fully active – participating member of the team. They will know that they are a valuable and vital part of your team's successes and will give their full commitment to the mission in part by accepting responsibility for and striving toward being able to passionately play their part.

It is a life of continuous learning. Championship teams are characterized by a growth mindset. If you are not investing in yourself and / or the team, then you're not 'all in'. Growth and learning necessitate embracing change and seeing challenges as opportunities. Everyone on team Jesus, from the Pope to all the players must be engaged in the pursuit of excellence, the desire to be transformed, possess hope that reveals opportunity. This is a growth mindset. We can't talk about this aspect without mentioning the importance of individual accountability. Every member must own their role and effort. We all need to understand the impact, as related to the success of the team, of our contributions and the consequences of our failures, our inaction. This requires a high level of honesty with yourself and humility. Our pursuit of excellence – holiness – will also necessarily involve health and wellness. This aspect for the members of team Jesus is often overlooked. But as it is true for sports, so it is also true for us. A healthy team is a high-performing team. On team Jesus we follow the 1-1-2 principle: 1 part physical, 1 part mental, 2 parts spiritual.

Team members who are committed to the life of the team and their personal growth become unified around the Vision, Values, and Standards and willingly humble themselves, surrender their individual goals and agenda in service of something larger than themselves. They will understand that what is best for the team is also best for them as individuals. Because of this willingness to dedicate themselves fully to the team and its common Vision, Values, and Standards, the Holy Spirit will be able to forge deep bonds, unity, and respect between the team members. They not only perform for themselves but work hard and give their all for the greater good of all. And, when success is achieved, they are more likely to share and deflect the credit, in the context of team Jesus, to God.

Finally, every team needs the right tools to fulfill the mission. Participating in a team culture that values and encourages innovation and creativity, openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and ability to discern together the path forward with agility, flexibility, and wisdom that enables the tailoring of strategies to needs, maximizing the effectiveness of guidance and support. The team members need to avoid becoming so stuck in ‘the way it’s always been done’. Members of Team Jesus must be able to continuously seek new and better ways of doing things gaining a competitive edge over the opposition. In our time, understanding and embracing the appropriate use of new technologies that not only enhance formation, performance, and communication, is of great importance. The strategic use of cutting-edge tools can provide a significant advantage. Other practical tools will include the ability to plan strategically; recognize and leverage the strengths of each team member, help them to recognize their gifts, and empower them to utilize their gifts; effective time management; intellectual strength exercises that lead to confidence and quick decision making; provide for time to acknowledge and celebrate achievements. Championship teams have specific systems for selection, enculturation, execution, evaluation, recognition, correction, and succession. All these various systems are developed, tweaked, and perfected over time to promote and support the Vision, Values, and Standards of the mission on a daily basis. By developing and aligning your systems, you build a sustainable, self-perpetuating, virtuous cycle that ensures you get, develop, and keep people and practices within your culture of victory.

Team Jesus... In the mind of Jesus—and therefore in the mind of the early evangelists—everyone who was known as a follower of Christ was expected to be a laborer in the field. There are too many Christians who are warming the benches, even though it is abundantly clear that the harvest is great. There is still a large proportion of the world who have not yet accepted Christ as their savior. In our families, which ideally, are the school of holiness where vocations are born and saints made. Husbands and wives must order their love to the supreme good of their spouse, which is God. If you are a parent, the bulk of your evangelization work must be directed at your children, starting at their births and not ending until death. Even if you are not a parent, you still can work at family evangelization. Friends, coworkers, neighbors, need healing and the saving knowledge of Christ. On team Jesus there will be a great diversity of people and gifts. Though the more introverted person might not see themselves as capable of being more than a bench warmer, they must be encouraged to be active missionary disciples according to who they are in this moment and use the gifts they’ve been given.

Our mission and focus are not just concerned for the souls of those who have never been on the team, but also those who need to be re-evangelized. Whether they are in the pews next to us or no longer show up. One of the largest “religious” groups in America is former Catholics. Many who still identify as Catholic receive the sacraments only irregularly. By emphasizing the importance of the sacraments to others in our parishes—particularly, by talking about how much they impact us—we can evangelize those who aren’t ‘all in’.

Jesus is saving the world, but not by himself. He wants to do it with our help. Such a task is intimidating and leads many Catholics to think they're not called to evangelize. But you can help with the conversion of those around you. From the pope down to the most recently baptized believer, we all share the same mission: to help Christ build up his Kingdom. This should be our greatest joy. As Pope Benedict once wrote: *"I am convinced that there is a great need for the whole Church to rediscover the joy of evangelization, to become a community inspired with missionary zeal to make Jesus better known and loved."*⁶ Jesus is the Lord of the Universe who has made us partners in his mission, official ambassadors of his Kingdom. Sometimes we forget that Jesus wants us to be active members of his Church. Sometimes we think of the Church kind of like a gas station - somewhere we go to fill up our spiritual tanks.

We are called today to become laborers with Jesus in the harvest that is the society in which we live. We are called today to labor, so that our society may be gradually transformed into a place where the values of the Gospel, often so little understood even by ourselves, will prevail. We do this as the Church, as a communion of persons united with the head, the master, Jesus who goes with us and the Holy Spirit who guides us. We are TEAM JESUS. As a person baptized in Jesus' name, I am a part of his Body. Where the body is, there, too, is the person. I am part of his Body; I am the visible indication of his presence. My voice is his voice. He told his disciples: *"Whoever listens to you listens to me."*

The more actively we take up our mission to spread Christ's Kingdom with our words, our prayers, and our example of Christian living, the more we will share in Christ's joy. If we courageously go out as Christ's ambassadors, we will come back "rejoicing", just like the 72 disciples.⁷ Both as individuals and as a parish community, we ought to regularly examine the quality and degree of our active participation in the mission we share. As individuals, in private prayer and during our worship we should ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds, so that each one of us can make an honest evaluation of our own response to being sent. When we come forward to receive the Eucharist, ask to be shown how to be a better follower, ask to be sent out this week to bring his Good News to someone who needs to hear it.

As a parish community, whatever we as a parish are doing, and whatever way we are living out our faith, it should look like the scriptural and historical early Church. We might ask ourselves if a visitor would leave feeling that we are a group of people "on a mission" or that we are more like a "private social club". Would they think that we are prioritizing the mission of Jesus or are we prioritizing our own self-interests? Would an outsider, after reading our parish bulletin, website, and reviewing our budget line items, feel that we are a parish that has a mission or that focuses on its own maintenance?

For many members of Team Jesus, who really want to be on the field and contribute to being a championship team, there is a lack of confidence in their gifts and the power of the Holy Spirit. The way others on team talk about evangelization becomes an obstacle to them because it seems so stiff, unnatural, programmatically regimented. Although the information they might be receiving is intended to be tools each person can integrate personally, it must be clear to the team that evangelization isn't marketing. It isn't what we might call a 'Christian cold-calling' system with a set script. It isn't a booklet to hand out with detailed descriptions on how to be saved, 'just say these words' and boom you're a Christian with no more worries. Although as tools these can be helpful, when they become the focus of our missionary efforts, the whole activity becomes instructions to follow instead of relationships to build. It can seem unnaturally forced and inauthentic as we spout memorized words from a salvation script. Too often the experience will leave feeling like failures.

⁶https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20061115_pan-asiatic-meeting.html

⁷ George Leo Haydock, *Haydock's Catholic Bible Commentary* (New York: Edward Dunigan and Brother, 1859), Lk 10:1-4.

Belief doesn't primarily grow because of a specific system of evangelization but instead because of the Christian multitudes using everyday activities to naturally share their faith with those around them, raising awareness of spiritual realities. Consider Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. She was coming to the well to draw water, and Christ used that simple activity as a springboard to talking about eternal truths. Rather than being 'preachy' it should be as natural as talking about any of our other 'passions', such as our kids, hobbies, sport team. Everyone has a sphere of influence. These are the people you encounter every day: your family, your co-workers, your neighbors, your friends, your fellow parishioners. You don't realize it, but you can have a great impact on these people. This is the platform from which you can evangelize the world.

Be sure to begin with yourself. If we don't commit each day to ongoing conversion / transformation ourselves, we won't be an effective evangelizer. Moreover, if we are truly and radically living our faith, we won't need to find people to evangelize; they will come to us asking why we live the way we do.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Evangelization:** The proclamation of the Gospel (Good News) of Jesus Christ by word and witness; the Church's mission to spread saving truth.
- **Team Jesus:** An analogy for the Church, emphasizing its collective, cooperative nature in fulfilling Christ's mission.
- **Missionary Disciples:** Individuals within the Church who are actively engaged in spreading the Gospel and living out Christ's teachings.
- **Mission and Vision (Church's):** The clear, compelling, and inspiring purpose and guiding light of the Church, which is the cause of Christ spiritually enfolded and collectively assented to by members.
- **Great Commission:** Jesus' instruction to his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you," forming the basis of the Christian mission.
- **Impostor (in Spurgeon's context):** One who claims to believe in Jesus but does not actively spread abroad His kingdom or share their faith.
- **Communio:** A term referring to the unity and communion of the Church as a community of brothers and sisters, united in Christ.
- **Mystical Body of Christ:** A theological concept describing the Church as a unified body whose members are joined to Christ, their head, through baptism and the divine life of God.
- **Team Identity (Church's):** The corporate personality and values of "Team Jesus" that guide the behavior and decisions of its members, rooted in their new life in Christ.
- **Core Values (Church's):** Unshakeable, non-negotiable bedrock principles (e.g., humility, patience, forbearance) that define the essence of the Church's identity and are foundational to its success.
- **Standards of Behavior:** Daily choices and actions expected of each team member, rooted in core values, that maximize the chances of the Vision becoming a reality.
- **Team Formation:** The ongoing process of developing energized and engaged team members who fully embrace the Vision, Values, and Standards, and take pride in their active participation.
- **Growth Mindset:** An attitude characterized by continuous learning, embracing change, and seeing challenges as opportunities for transformation and pursuit of excellence.
- **Individual Accountability:** The responsibility of each team member to own their role and effort, understanding the impact of their contributions and the consequences of their failures or inaction.

- **Re-evangelization:** The process of evangelizing those who have been previously evangelized or are nominally Christian but have become inactive or disconnected from the Church.
- **Sphere of Influence:** The network of people an individual regularly encounters (family, co-workers, neighbors, friends) where natural evangelization can occur.
- **1-1-2 Principle:** A concept for health and wellness on "Team Jesus," prioritizing 1 part physical, 1 part mental, and 2 parts spiritual well-being.

Briefing Document: The Church as "Team Jesus" and the Mission of Evangelization

This briefing document synthesizes key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time.pdf," focusing on the concept of the Church as "Team Jesus" and the imperative of evangelization. It highlights the collaborative nature of the Church's mission, the essential elements of a "championship culture" for missionary disciples, and the individual and communal responsibilities in spreading the Gospel.

I. The Church as "Team Jesus": A Collective Endeavor

The core metaphor presented is that the "Church's mission" is a "collective endeavor," likened to a "team sport." This analogy emphasizes cooperation, shared purpose, and individual participation within a unified structure.

- **Hierarchical Structure and Roles:** The document outlines a clear hierarchy within "Team Jesus":
- **Team Owner:** God the Father
- **Manager:** Jesus
- **Unites and Animates:** Holy Spirit
- **Coach:** Pope
- **Assistant Coaches:** Bishops
- **Team Captains:** Priests
- **Players:** All baptized believers
- **Unity and Communion as Empowerment:** The "unity of the Church, our communion empowers us to take up our individual positions on the field and to play with one heart and mind." This unity is not merely organizational but spiritual, as individuals are "simultaneously constituted into the mystical body of Christ" through baptism, becoming "one family, one team."

II. Essential Elements of a "Championship Culture" for Missionary Disciples

Drawing parallels with successful sports teams, the document identifies several key elements for building a "championship culture" within the Church, focused on evangelization.

A. Clear, Compelling, and Inspiring Mission and Vision

- **Guiding Light:** A "clear, compelling, inspiring mission and vision" is the "indispensable guiding light and foundation of purpose." This vision is "spiritually enfolded in the Church and collectively assented to by the members."
- **Passion and Sacrifice:** This vision "excites them. It provides them with authentically human meaning and purpose for every action." Members are "innately drawn to," "passionately yearn for," and "willing to make sacrifices to achieve" this vision, with "hearts and minds set like flint on their purpose."

B. Credible and Powerful Leadership

- **Tone Setting:** Leadership, from the Pope down to team captains (Priests), "set the tone for the Church just as a Coach and his assistants set the program by designing, developing, and driving the culture."
- **Apostolic Example:** The Apostles are presented as the "primary creators, champions, and sustainers of the team," who "embraced the mission, reveled in its challenges," and "engaged in blunt communication and demanded accountability."

C. Strong Team Identity and Core Values

- **New Identity in Christ:** "Your identity on team Jesus rises from your new life in Christ," establishing a "team personality defined by him."
- **Bedrock Principles:** "Solid champion sport team has core values that are the bedrock principles that support the victory culture." These are "nonnegotiable, sacred values" that "define the essence of your identity and are expected to be shared by everyone."
- **Integrity and Truth:** Living these values means striving for "a life of perfect integrity and truth, a life of deep compassion and concern."

D. Team Life: Communication, Conflict Resolution, and Standards

- **Open Communication:** "Honest, open, and clear communication" is the "lifeblood of successful teams," fostering understanding and strengthening bonds.
- **Managing Conflict:** While conflict is "inevitable," the document stresses the need for "solid conflict resolution strategies to address issues promptly and maintain a positive team dynamic," alongside the Sacraments.
- **High Standards of Behavior:** Standards "rooted in our core values" are the "daily choices and actions that either maximize (support) or minimize (undermine) the chances of your Vision becoming a reality." These standards must be "protected" and "fully embraced" as they provide a "competitive edge" against "team fallen angels."

E. Team Formation and Continuous Growth

- **Energized and Engaged Members:** A culture of victory consists of "energized and engaged team members who fully embrace the Vision, Values, and Standards."
- **Growth Mindset:** Championship teams are "characterized by a growth mindset," involving "continuous learning," embracing change, and seeing challenges as opportunities.
- **Individual Accountability:** "Every member must own their role and effort," understanding the "impact...of our contributions and the consequences of our failures, our inaction."
- **Holiness and Wellness:** The pursuit of excellence (holiness) "necessarily involve health and wellness," following a "1-1-2 principle: 1 part physical, 1 part mental, 2 parts spiritual."

F. Right Tools and Innovation

- **Innovation and Creativity:** A team culture should "value and encourage innovation and creativity," being "openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit" and "avoid becoming so stuck in 'the way it's always been done'."

- **New Technologies and Strategic Planning:** This includes "understanding and embracing the appropriate use of new technologies" and strategic planning, recognizing and leveraging individual gifts, and effective time management.
- **Systems for Success:** Championship teams have "specific systems for selection, enculturation, execution, evaluation, recognition, correction, and succession" to build a "sustainable, self-perpetuating, virtuous cycle."

III. The Imperative of Active Evangelization

The document strongly asserts that "being a Christian requires active participation, not just passive belief," emphasizing the urgent and immediate mission of spreading the Gospel.

- **Every Christian is a Missionary:** Quoting Charles Spurgeon, "Every Christian is either a missionary or an impostor," the text affirms that if Jesus is precious, one "will not be able to keep your good news to yourself." This resonates with Catholic teaching on the "Great Commission."
- **Beyond Private Edification:** "The Gospel is not only for our private edification or pleasure. It bears the seeds of saving truth that we are called to spread."
- **Diverse Roles, One Goal:** While "full-time missionaries" exist, others contribute through "prayer, financial support, community service, and acts of kindness."
- **The Abundant Harvest:** Despite the "harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few," the early Church's rapid growth demonstrates what is possible through "the grace of God, the clarity of their purpose, and the unity of their hearts and minds."
- **Re-evangelization:** The mission extends not only to those who have never known Christ but also to those "who need to be re-evangelized," including former Catholics or those who receive sacraments irregularly.

IV. Practical Application and Self-Reflection

The document calls for a critical examination of individual and communal participation in the mission.

- **Beyond a "Gas Station" Church:** The Church is not merely "somewhere we go to fill up our spiritual tanks," but a call to become "laborers with Jesus in the harvest."
- **Personal and Parish Examination:** Individuals are urged to ask the Holy Spirit "how to be a better follower" and "to be sent out this week to bring his Good News." Parishes should assess whether they appear to be "on a mission" or "a private social club," prioritizing Jesus' mission over self-interests.
- **Authentic Evangelization:** Evangelization is not "marketing" or a "Christian cold-calling system" with a set script. It's about "relationships to build," naturally sharing faith through "everyday activities," like Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman.
- **Sphere of Influence:** Everyone has a "sphere of influence" – family, co-workers, neighbors, friends – which serves as "the platform from which you can evangelize the world."
- **Ongoing Conversion:** Effective evangelization begins with personal commitment to "ongoing conversion / transformation." When truly living one's faith, people "will come to us asking why we live the way we do."

In essence, the document presents evangelization not as an optional activity for a select few, but as the fundamental, collective mission of every baptized Christian within a divinely structured and empowered "Team Jesus." Success in this mission requires a deep commitment to shared vision, strong leadership, core values, unified effort, continuous growth, and an authentic, relational approach to sharing the Gospel.