

Holy Evangelism: (talk notes)

May the words of my mouth

(Art collector story)

Evangelism is basically the spreading of the Good News about Jesus and His victory for our salvation. To put it another way, to evangelize is to be God's instrument to free people from their hopeless addiction to sin.

The object of evangelism is conversion. There are (3) three degrees of conversion according to Catholic theology;

1. Conversion from mortal sin to the state of sanctifying grace. (especially the initial decision)
2. Conversion from venial sins to Christian growth. (times of re-commitment . & 3.
- Conversion to heroic virtue & martyr readiness (chips-down total commitment)

Our job as evangelists is to be facilitators of conversion. We cannot actually convert anyone ourselves. That's God's job. In the power of the Holy Spirit, we are simply instruments of the ministry of Jesus. We deliver the message and leave the results between God and the listener.

The devil has invented lots of roadblocks to effective evangelism. I'll list several and talk about a few of them. The following are lies, twisted ideas and half truths.

1. Evangelism is mostly for missionaries, priests and nuns. Wrong.
2. Evangelism is winning arguments about religion. It involves skilful debate coercion and even tricks. Wrong.
3. You can evangelize without a community. No, not without being sent and being responsible to a community nor without representing a vibrant Christian community to invite people into. All of you here tonight are sent by the diocese, the parish and the prayer group.
4. Our job as Church is mostly to focus on social needs. This is important but can be misleading.
5. Local evangelism is mostly about getting lapsed Catholics back to Holy Mass. To

just get them back to mass without turning them on to Jesus alive in His Church doesn't do much good. That's probably why they slid away in the first place. Getting them back to Mass may possibly be pre-evangelism, but, without conversion it is not enough in itself.

6. Everyone is saved anyhow. What do you think? Can non-Christians get to heaven? This is really the wrong question. The right question is, Can I be saved if I refuse to share the Good News of Jesus with them?
7. Evangelism is proselytizing. We should mind our own business and respect theirs. No. Evangelism is our loving business.
8. One Religion is as good as another, so long as we believe.
9. with Evangelization is finished when you bring people to a personal relationship Christ.
10. Lay people evangelize mainly by leading good lives.

I often cringe when I hear priests try to get us off the hook and tickle our ears by saying, "You lay people can effectively evangelize simply by leading lives of good example." Bearing witness by our good lives is, of course, very important, but, in itself, it is not evangelism. At best, it is pre-evangelism, and even that, only if the connection between your good lifestyle and your Christianity is quit clear. We all know non-Christians, maybe even anti-Christians who people consider fine neighbors and good citizens. Yet their good example does not spread the Good News. They do not attract people to Jesus alive in His Church. Even our own good example must be obviously the fruit of our Christianity to even be pre-evangelism.

There are four things needed for our lifestyle to help in evangelism

1. It has to be a genuine example of Christian lifestyle. (more than good neighbor or good citizenship) Outstanding Christian witness like that of St. Francis will do it. Few of us lead that committed a life that it attracts others to the faith.
2. It must be obvious that the good example flows from our Christian faith.
3. the lifestyle and good works must somehow be calling others to the plan of God, or at least preparing them for such a call.
4. You need to somehow, when the occasion arises, be willing and able to use simple words of witness or direction pointing to and inviting to Jesus. Explain the connection between a heroic Christian lifestyle and the Good News of Jesus.

The Holy Gospel commands us to **tell** the Good News. Real evangelism almost always involves words. Maybe sometimes only a word here and a word there, but words. Now having said that, we can talk about the evangelical value of lifestyle. That's simply, our lifestyle must back up our claims, or we are hypocrites. On the other hand, if we claim

to fulfill our evangelism duties without using words, It is most often a cop out.

Some people are called to foreign missions or to more local full time evangelism, and we should be open to any call from God at any age, Most however are called to neighborhood and workplace evangelism. This is not a lesser call.

You can be an effective, and a great, and a holy evangelist right here in Stephenson. This is most likely where most of you are called. God knows He needs you here.

1. Pray for people and pray to see opportunities to evangelize.
2. Forget your ungodly fears. They are good for nothing.
3. Talk to people. Be friendly to everyone. Listen to them. Put in a good word for God and Church wherever you can. Talk to strangers at Church. Think of leading questions to ask. In prayer time, plan things to say.
4. Witness what God has done in your life. Witnessing only at prayer meeting is preaching to the choir. Practice here, but bring your witness out to those who really need to hear it.
5. Pray with people and over people, on the spot.
6. Defend the Truth. Correct the ignorant., or should I be nice and say, council the misinformed.
7. Visit the sick and shut-ins, not just old friends, but especially people who need your witness.
8. Invite, invite, invite. Invite or better yet, bring people to Church events. To Holy Mass, to prayer meeting, to LSS, We keep telling people that, but most of us don't do it. Why is that? Evangelism is about inviting, and the Bible commands us to evangelize. This is a commandment, not a suggestion. It's wrong to break a commandment. Invite people to your home for a talk or video, invite to Thursday evening Bible study. Invite to Sunday morning Catholic Inquiry at 9:15 AM down in the Church Hall. To RCIA, to the monthly video breakfast, Generations of Faith events, the new St. Vincent de Paul chapter, coffee and donuts after Mass and talk to new people there. Don't only sit with your friends unless, of course they need to be evangelized. Invite people to watch an EWTN program with you. We could go on and on.

How many here have actually even invited someone to prayer meeting lately?

9. Make sure you are well evangelized yourself. If we ourselves are not 100% committed to Jesus alive in our Catholic Church then we are the ones in need of evangelization. But we cannot let that excuse us from the command to be evangelists. Jesus, after all, can use a donkey if He wants to.
10. The Pope says we Catholics should base our evangelism more on the Eucharist.

This is the heart and power of historic Christianity. Eucharist is the closest personal relationship with Jesus available this side of heaven.

Instead of asking people, "Hay friend, are you born again?" we maybe should ask everybody, "Hay friend, have you eaten the flesh of the lamb of God?" The ancient Hebrews had to eat the Passover lamb of the Old Covenant. We in the New Covenant need to eat the Lamb of God.

Holy Commitment:

Holy commitment, holy dependability, holy responsibility, holy obedience, these all go arm in arm with Holy Zeal and holy boldness and holy evangelism.. One supports the other. As committed Christians, our time, talents and treasures all come from God and all belong to God. Notice I say, our time belongs to God. All our time has a place in God's plan. Our Creator presents time, talents and treasures to us for two main reasons; to use them in God's grace to work out our salvation, and to build the Body of Christ and the Kingdom. All else is wasteful. Wasting time is a sin. So is wasting talents and things. God has given us free will control over our time, talents and treasures in order that we might freely and joyfully use them as the Holy Spirit directs us. The more we learn to realize this, the more fulfilling our life will be.

As committed Christians you and I should strongly desire to burn up our gifts and talents and time and treasures, indeed to burn up our whole lives for the Lord. Let me suggest our favorite daydreams should be about suffering heroically with and for Jesus alive in us. We should welcome hardships and persecution as we work through grace, for the welfare and salvation of fellow human beings.

We should never insult God by offering Him our left over time, our unused talents, or our spare money. God needs to be way above any other priority we have. When our Faith Formation Coordinator asks for help, how dare we say we don't have the time, as if everything else we do were more important than God's work. All our time is a gift from God, and is only productive when it is offered back to God. Don't ever dare say, "this is more of a commitment than I care to make," One day we will all stand before the judgment of God and be required to account for every moment.

No commitment is to big to offer to Jesus alive through His Church. He is Creator God . He is the reason for our existence. Nothing else even comes close in importance. If you offer the Lord less than all your life and time, you are a slacker. Don't be a slacker Catholic. The only life that makes sense is to be a totally committed Catholic.