

Stewardship Bulletin Message Number 14 (November 2010)

STEWARDSHIP

Providing Teachable Moments for Evangelization

We hear and read a lot about evangelization these days. The word "evangelization" comes from the Greek word, "*evangelizo*", which means "good news". The early Christians used the word when they shared the good news about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ with all people at every opportunity. They modeled their lives on the teachings of Jesus; and they invited others to change their lives, be baptized, and join the community of believers. They wanted to share the good news that by knowing, loving and serving Jesus Christ, everyone could hope to attain Eternal Life.

Today is the era of a "New Evangelization" with a goal to transform all people into disciples of Christ, using any and all current technologies and advanced methods of communication. Further, we recognize that the laity, as the people of God, are encouraged to share the good news. No longer the sole responsibility of priests, religious and missionaries, we are all called upon to be emissaries for Christ. Everyone who has been baptized has a fundamental responsibility to evangelize.

Several recent archdiocesan pastoral initiatives are supportive of evangelization by the laity. Among them are the focus of the formation of the Office for the New Evangelization of Youth and Young Adults, the faith-sharing emphasis of the ARISE Together in Christ program, and the sacramental reconciliation offered by The Light Is On For You opportunity. Soon, parishes throughout the archdiocese will embark on the "Catholics Come Home" initiative; a reaching out to communicate God's love, especially to those Catholics whose connection with the Church has become weak or broken.

At the level of the Universal Church, Pope Benedict XVI, in an apostolic letter released October 12th, unveiled a new Vatican agency, the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization. The council will develop evangelization strategies to specifically combat the "de-Christianization" of countries that were first evangelized centuries ago.

Clearly, evangelization is being recognized as, in the words of Pope Paul VI, "the primary mission of the Church".

Our parish, which is now entering its seventh year as a stewardship parish, is blessed with a spirituality that is strongly linked to evangelization. We have come to understand that all that we are and all that we have are gifts from God. In gratitude for these gifts, we have come to experience profound happiness in giving back to God the first portion of our time, talent and treasure to help build the Kingdom.

Evangelization includes an element of teaching. And, what better way of teaching than by example?

Our individual, concrete, joyfully-given acts of stewardship are one of the ways that we share the good news. Others, who do not know Christ, may observe our happiness in discipleship and wonder, "What motivates these people? - What do they know that I don't? - How can I find out more about their joy?"

And, there is the fertile ground for sowing the seeds of evangelization. Stewardship: every "giving back to God" is a teachable moment for evangelization.

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