



Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time November 8, 2015 B

How willing are you to be a missionary for the Lord in your own family, neighborhood, place of work and recreation?

Before he ascends into heaven, Jesus tells his disciples: “Go into the whole world and make disciples of all nations...” (Mt 28:19). Jesus speaks these words to very ordinary men like you and me. After receiving the anointing of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, the disciples fearlessly go and share the Good News of Jesus.

As baptized Catholics and Christians, we are commissioned to do the same thing. But the vast majority of us Catholics are scared to act on these words of Jesus. We feel that it's outside of our comfort zone. How exciting it would be if every Ascension Catholic was willing to be a missionary for Jesus in his/her own family, neighborhood, and place of work and recreation.

How can we move in that direction?

First, by seeking the help of Jesus who inspired the disciples and continues to inspire thousands and thousands of Christians to be missionaries in his name.

We by praying for the courage to be God's instrument in drawing non-churchgoing Catholics back to the Eucharist and to drawing non-Catholic non-churchgoers into looking at Ascension as a potential church home. If you have little or no desire to be God's instrument in this great apostolate, you could begin to pray for this desire. You could pray something like this:

“Jesus, you know my life is so preoccupied with many things, that I rarely think about my call to be your missionary in my little part of the world. I ask you now to place that desire in my heart. Give me a great desire for this work and show me how to do it.”

If you begin to say this prayer or a similar one with perseverance, I believe God will grant you that desire. Over the years, I have seen Catholics who overcame their shyness and indifference to become missionaries for the Lord. How did this happen? Jesus touched their heart like he touched the heart of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), and as a result, she felt compelled to share with

all who were willing to listen. Jesus is at work in our hearts and he can move any of us to do what we think is outside our comfort zone. We just need to have the desire to be used by him. If you already have that desire, when did it begin and have you been acting on it?

Frequently praying for opportunities to share faith

For those of us who are willing to be God's instrument in bringing back lapsed Catholics to the Eucharist, it is important that we frequently ask God to give us opportunities to share our faith and the wisdom to do it well and not in a way that turns people off. A simple prayer in this regard might be the following:

Jesus, this day, this week, give me opportunities to share my Catholic (or Christian) faith with others. Help me to notice those opportunities and give me the courage and the wisdom to use them well.

Pause: How do you feel about the above prayer? Do you see it as a positive way to pray? If you have little or no desire to pray it, what do you think is the obstacle?

Conversation with someone who may or may not have a church home

Each person has to decide when it might seem like a good time to ask someone: ‘Do you have a church family that you belong to?’ If they answer ‘No,’ you could say: ‘I hate to see a nice guy like you go to hell’ (just kidding!). If they answer ‘Yes,’ you could ask: ‘What church do you belong to?’ If they don't attack you for being nosy, you might ask: ‘What do you like best about your church?’ (I ask the above questions all the time when knocking at doors, and folks are happy to tell me if they belong to a church family.

If people tell me that they belong to an evangelical church like Calvary Chapel, I would usually ask: ‘What church did you grow up in?’ Most people who go to churches like Calvary Chapel did not go there as a child. Sadly, all too many of them grew up in the Catholic church.

If you ask the question: ‘*What church did you grow up in?*’ and they answer: ‘*Catholic,*’ you could then say ‘*Oh, another poor ex-Catholic going to hell*’ (again, just kidding!). When people tell me that they grew up Catholic but now go to another church, I ask: ‘*If you don’t mind me asking, what pulled you away from the Catholic Church?*’ As you might imagine, the answers could vary, to name a few: the clergy sex scandals, hurt caused by failure of the church to fulfill one’s spiritual needs or to reach out in time of need, etc.

If people say the church hurt or failed them, be sure that you empathize with them. Perhaps you yourself have had the same experience in the past that you can share with them. After taking time to listen attentively to the person’s story, you could ask: ‘*Have you ever been to Ascension Catholic Church?*’ If they say ‘*No,*’ you could tell them about Ascension. I am in the process of preparing a special leaflet to give out when I meet fallen away Catholics. I particularly like to tell them about the CRHP process, our biannual retreat weekend for men and women. A new CRHP leaflet is also being prepared this weekend.

I very much thank God for CRHP because it is a great place to send people who may need a spiritual awakening or a very good Catholic spiritual experience.

Pause: Could you see yourself becoming involved in a conversation like the one described above? Have you ever had a conversation like, or somewhat like, the above? If so, share what that experience was like. If you cannot see yourself initiating a conversation like the one described above, what hinders you from doing so?

Other tips and possibilities

- ◆ Leave a copy of the church bulletin in a place where a co-worker or friend may notice, and *pray* that they notice it and that it leads to a faith or religious conversation. We cannot overestimate the importance of prayer in the evangelization process. I love the saying, “*Act as if everything depended on yourself. Pray as if everything depended on God.*”
- ◆ Invite co-workers, friends, neighbors to a parish mission, to a CRHP weekend, to a fun event at the church, or to participate in one of our outreach ministries. Remember: you will already have succeeded, if partly, by inviting. Failure is failing to invite.
- ◆ Tell people about Divine Mercy Radio 920 AM.
- ◆ Tell them about EWTN, the Catholic television station Every Monday at 8:00pm, Marcus Grodi (a former Protestant Minister) hosts a program called *The*

Journey Home in which he interviews former Protestant ministers who have journeyed home into the Catholic Church, as well as ‘reverts’—persons raised Catholic, who subsequently joined an evangelical church, and are now led back into their Catholic home. As God leads, consider telling folks about this program. But first, see it for yourself on EWTN.

- ◆ Sharing a booklet or CD from our Lighthouse CD rack, which can be found in the church vestibule.

Pause: Have you ever done any of the above? If yes, what motivated you to do things that God could use to touch people’s lives? If no, what hinders you from acting on any of the above suggestions?

The following prayer is a very good one for us to pray that we may become instruments of the Lord to help him draw lapsed Catholics back to the church and the sacraments.

*Christ Jesus, Head of the Body, the Church,
You so loved the world You gave your life
to redeem us and restore us to Your friendship.*

*Give us, we pray, the grace we need
to speak lovingly and confidently
a word of invitation to inactive Catholics
to return to the practice of their faith.*

*Make us instruments of Your welcome and peace.
Bring back to the fold all who have been hardened
by the world or wounded by the Church.*

*May they know the joy of reconciliation with You
and join us once more at the Table of the Eucharist.*

*Use us as messengers of your love
to reach out to inactive Catholics,
to marginalized Catholics, and to anyone searching
for a faith community they can call “Home.”*

*Grace Your Church with new members
strong in the practice of their faith
and in their devotion to the Eucharist.
Help us grow in love for one another
and for the Most Holy Name of Jesus
in whose Name we offer this prayer. Amen.*

Pope Francis’ timely prayer intention

This past Tuesday while preparing for the 7:30am Mass, I read the following prayer by Pope Francis. It is his Special Worldwide Prayer Intention for the month of November.

*Dear God our Father,
During this month of November,
we pray for the gift of dialogue.
May we be open to personal encounters
and dialogue with everyone,
even with those whose convictions differ from our own.
Give us the grace to do so in love.*

*Lord, we also lift up the pastors of our Church.
Grant them a profound love for their people
so that they may accompany
and walk with them and enliven their hope. Amen*

Francis prays that we obtain “*the gift of dialogue*” and that we may “*be open to personal encounters and dialogue with everyone,*” especially those whose convictions are different from ours.

When I read those words, I immediately saw in them an affirmation of what I am trying to communicate in this column—openness to talking with others—in this case, talking to others about faith and church.

I also loved the second part of the prayer which was for pastors—that God may “*grant them a profound love for their people so that they may accompany and walk with them and enliven their hope.*”

In my dealings with you, our parishioners, and with those I encounter in my Door-to-Door Ministry, I try to do what Francis is praying for. I ask that you continue to pray that I may do a better job of it.

Pause: What are your thoughts on Pope Francis's prayer?

A team of intercessors

I know for sure that our Door-to-Door Ministry will only be successful if it is backed up by lots and lots and lots of intercessory prayer, which is prayer for the needs of *others* (versus prayer of petition which is for *our own* needs).

So as I said in my homily today, I would like to have an *army* of intercessors who will be praying that God moves people to open their doors and hearts to those of us who will come knocking. I love the following statement by the late Jesuit priest, Anthony de Mello.

It is only at the end of this world that we shall realize how the destinies of persons and nations have been shaped, not so much by the external actions of powerful men and by events that seemed inevitable, but by the quiet, silent, irresistible prayer of persons the world will never know.

In Exodus 17:8-16, the Israelites are in a battle with the

Amalekites, and Moses is on a nearby hill praying for their success. As long as Moses keeps his hands raised in prayer, the Israelites are winning. I suggest one decade of the Rosary each day for this important missionary cause. Some of you will be able to pray a whole Rosary. In this way, you will be a part of a great outreach to our brothers and sisters who no longer come to church. Needless to say, it is also very important for those who go out with me to also prepare with a time of prayer.

Prayer for total spiritual transformation

Recently, I came across this prayer in Matthew Kelly's new book *Rediscover Jesus*. It certainly is not an easy prayer. It demands a big trust in God.

*Loving Father, here I am.
I trust that you have an incredible plan for me.
Transform me. Transform my life.
Everything is on the table.
Take what you want to take and give what you
want to give.
Transform me into the person you created me to be
so I can live the life you envision for me.
I hold nothing back; I am 100 percent available.
How can I help?
Amen.*

Pause: What are your thoughts and feelings on the above prayer?

After the prayer, Kelly adds...

If you want to see miracles, pray that prayer. If you want to see and experience miracles in your own life, pray a wholehearted prayer of transformation. That's a prayer God will answer. God always answers a prayer of transformation. Never once in the history of the world has God not answered a sincere prayer of transformation.

Pause: How do you feel about becoming a prayer warrior for our outreach to Catholics who have strayed from their Catholic roots?

Have a blessed week,



