

The New Evangelization!

The nature of the Catholic Church is *missionary*. (*Catechism #850*) Jesus called his apostles 1) to be with him and 2) to be sent out to evangelize. (Mk. 3:14)

The nature of a vocation is to receive a call from Jesus to know him personally and then to share the Good News about God's love to all.

There are many communities in the Catholic Church and several ways to serve. I am a Passionist priest. The Passionists were founded in the 1700's in Italy by St. Paul of the Cross. Our main apostolate is to be itinerant preachers (parish missionaries) and to do retreat work. We have retreat centers in many cities in the U.S. including in Houston where I live. We Passionists are in 64 countries in the world. We proclaim God's love revealed in the Passion of Jesus Christ. In fact, our first vow (along with poverty, chastity and obedience) is to meditate upon the Passion of Jesus and share its meaning to all.

Something New!

In this article I want to highlight something called the "new evangelization" called for from Popes John Paul II to Pope Leo XIV.

Evangelization is simply sharing the Gospel. The Gospel, of course, centers around Jesus Christ and a saving relationship with him that leads to eternal life. The Magna Carta of evangelization is Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Evangelization in the Modern World.)

By our life and words we evangelize the faithful many of whom have been over sacramentalized and under evangelized. We also share the Gospel with those who have fallen away from the faith as well as with those who have not yet come to faith in Jesus. We believers are the light of the world and the salt of the earth and God will work through our vocational commitment and sacrifices to bring new life to others.

The new evangelization is *new* because of its *methods, expression and ardor*.

Methods: Back in 2006 I got involved in TV and radio ministry. I knew the way to reach out to the nones (those who claim no religious affiliation)

youth and fallen away was not to hand out pamphlets, but to enter their lives through media. My TV and radio programs air on the Global Catholic network EWTN (Sundays at 9:30 am ET – Radio at 8:30 pm.) In addition, I am the only Catholic priest on the Protestant TBN (Sundays at 7 am ET.) My programs also air in several cities such as in New York, Boston, Atlanta, Dallas, Houston and Los Angeles on Secular stations such as CBS and Fox as well as Catholic stations. See my website: www.francedric.org for more information.

I am a Passionist religious (40 years) and priest (35 years) and our founder St. Paul of the Cross was nicknamed a “hunter of souls.” We hunt for souls in evangelization, not trying to “win” people, but love them into receiving eternal life. The motto of my ministry is “*Touching lives/Saving souls.*” Our Catholic documents tell us the primary duty of a priest is the proclamation of the Gospel of God to all. (*Presbyterorum Ordinis, 4*) Evangelization happens when people see our loving deeds, but in order for true evangelization to occur, the name of Jesus must be explicitly announced.

Those of you who are discerning a vocation, please realize your call is to be with Jesus and share Jesus with others. Coming to a personal relationship with Jesus and evangelization is the call of every baptized Christian.

Expression: In the past preached homilies centered around catechesis. While being taught about the history of the Church, the nature of a sacrament and canon law is important, the emphasis now is to center on the person and activity of Jesus Christ. A homily should emerge from the Biblical readings and focus on Jesus himself.

People everywhere are hungering for something more, something deeper. St. Augustine famously taught: “Our hearts are made for God and our hearts are restless until they rest in God.” Hunger, thirst and loneliness (Billy Graham called this a “cosmic loneliness”) are tell tale signs of God’s activity in our soul. Francis Thompson in a poem said, “God is the hound of Heaven.” God is always searching for us and trying to woo us to himself. He works in our mind, wills and through our emotions and feelings.

The core of the Gospel is “being with Jesus, *abiding* in Jesus.” We develop a personal relationship with Jesus when we just don’t know about him, but come to know the real Risen Lord. We can come to know through

celebration of the sacraments, yes, but especially through reading the Scriptures and personal prayer.

When we read the Bible we hear Jesus the gracious invitation: “Come to me all you who are burdened and heavy laden and I will give you rest.” (Mt. 11: 28-30) Jesus was always inviting people to come to him, to get to know him. What was unique about his ministry (and caused scandal) was his reaching out to those on the margins and the peripheries of society. His ministry was to tax collectors, women, prostitutes and those who were sick of mind and body. When challenged about his ministry Jesus replied, “It isn’t the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick who have need. I haven’t come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” (Mt. 9:12)

We come to know Jesus personally by spending time with him but also through knowing why he came and what he has done for us. Jesus said, “I have come that you may have life and life abundant.” (Jn. 10:10) The abundant life he was referring to was the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the foretaste of the glories to come and the seal of our salvation.

What has Jesus come to bring us? Jesus put it this way in this hub verse of the Gospels: “The Son of Man has come not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mk. 10:45) Fulton Sheen in his book: *The Life of Christ*, said Jesus was the only person “born to die.” By his suffering and death our sins are forgiven and we have been ransomed from death to eternal life. You come to know Jesus in a personal way when you believe and receive Jesus as your Lord and personal savior. Vocations flow from knowing Jesus.

Ardor: When it comes to proclaiming Jesus we should show gravity, energy and enthusiasm. After all, we are talking about eternal life in Heaven with God! I am a Passionist priest. The word Passion means suffering, but it also means enthusiasm. The name I have given my TV and radio programs is “*Live with Passion!*” I conclude every broadcast with: “Don’t just live, live with *Passion!*”

We should be excited about our faith! The Holy Spirit comes to vivify and energize our lives and words with enthusiasm. When the apostles received the Holy Spirit they discovered a new power to live, pray and proclaim.

Vocations: I know that most of you reading these words are discerning a vocation to the religious life. I thank you for your openness to God's will for your life. As you spend time with Jesus and discern, may the Spirit help you to surrender fully and become all you can be. The foundation of my ministry is this saying: "Who you are is God's gift to you. Who you *become* is your gift to God!"

I dare you to become! I challenge you to launch out into the deep for a catch! Make the most of your life and realize your God given potential. St. Carlos Acutis was a God influencer through media. You too can help change the world.

Fr. Cedric Pisegna, C.P. is a Passionist priest. He has a media ministry and has authored 26 books including his latest: *Thorns have Roses*. For more information: www.frcedric.org To contact Fr. Cedric: frcedric@frcedric.org