

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Year C July 4, 2010

Theme: Move the Cat

Copyright ©2010, Rev. Larry W. Dorsch, St. Paul Church, 140 Walnut Street, Weirton, WV 26062.
All rights reserved. May not be reproduced in any form without written permission.

Two clean-cut young men dressed in black pants, white shirts and black ties rang the doorbell.

The lady of the house opened the door and when she saw the two Mormon missionaries said: "I'm Catholic. I'm not interested," then slammed the door.

When she did so, however, the door bounced back at her as if it had a spring on it.

"Those sneaky devils," she thought, "they must have stuck a foot in the door."

So she reared back and slammed the door even harder a second time; but again it bounced right back at her even harder.

As she prepared to give it all she had a third time and break that blocking foot, one of the missionaries said: "Lady, before you do that again you may want to move your cat."

Mormon missionaries and Jehovah's witnesses take seriously the story of this weekend's Gospel text.

In fact, the Mormons send their sons out two-by-two on two-year long missionary journeys.

During that time they can only call home on Christmas and Mother's Day and must live quite an austere life.

But, two-by-two they preach the good news.

We Catholics don't much take to this style of evangelizing.

In fact, many Catholics would probably say that evangelizing – that is, spreading the good news – is the job of the clergy, of priests and bishops.

Yet, down deep we all know – and our Church teaches – that **every disciple has the responsibility to share the good news** of Jesus.

Luke's Gospel even gives us an indication of this.

We heard today how Jesus sent **72 disciples** out as pairs to every town and village he intended to visit.

Just one chapter earlier he had sent the **Twelve** on the very same mission with quite similar instructions.

Neither Mark nor Matthew offer this expansion of the missionary effort from just the Twelve to an additional Seventy-two.

Luke was writing for his audience some fifty years after the death of Jesus and writing in an area where, thanks to the work of people like St. Paul, the **missionary territory had exploded exponentially**.

Luke apparently also remembered some passages from the Hebrew scriptures when Moses first appointed Twelve leaders to help him but, when his responsibilities and the size of the community had grown, he later had to appoint – you guessed it – seventy-two additional leaders.

Thus, Luke used the same story Matthew and Mark have about the Twelve, but added the story of the **Seventy-Two** to speak to the expanded need in his own time: **the expanded need for additional proclaimers** of the Good News.

If that need for evangelists was great in Luke's time, **how much more so in our own!**

Every time a **poll** comes out, fewer and fewer people report belief in God.

More people seem to have adopted a **secular world view** with little or no spirituality, little reference on a daily basis to a Higher Power.

Certainly the number of **people who regularly worship is down**, including in our own Catholic community and especially among the so-called “Gen-Y-ers,” that is young adults.

Recently I saw data indicating that 49% of the residents of Hancock County have no religious affiliation.

We Catholics are not going to be sending pairs of missionaries out any time soon, that’s for sure; this approach to evangelizing has just **not our style** (even though the data shows the Mormons as one of the fastest growing religious communities in the world.)

What might do is look for **more subtle ways** to evangelize, to tell the good news.

For example, I’m driving with a colleague whom I know has no religious affiliation to a meeting down state and in the car I might ask: **“Do you ever think about death and dying?”**

Subsequent conversation might lead to a discussion of the good news of Christ’s death and resurrection.

Or, you are walking the neighborhood with a friend and you say: “You know, last Sunday at my church, the scripture reading ended with the line, **‘your names will be written in heaven.’** What do you think that means?”

Now this sort of evangelizing obviously means a great deal of **non-judgmental listening**, of asking more questions than making statements and of never, ever arguing.

It means allowing the other person to **explore their own feelings and beliefs** out loud and offering your own gently, always with an openness to further discussion.

To evangelize even in this softer, subtler way means that we have to be **sure ourselves of what the good news is...**

...that we can express **in our own words** this good news,

...and that we can tell clearly what this good news **has meant in our own lives.**

What a shame, what a scandal, if we Catholics do not evangelize because we don't know or can't express or are unable to tell what the message of Jesus has meant in our lives.

We certainly can and do evangelize **by silent example** but at some point it is necessary, as the Letter of Peter said it, **"to give a reason for this hope of ours."**

Brothers and sisters, we have been **charged by Jesus** with delivering a message of hope to this world, the good news of God's mercy and goodness.

We dare not hold that message **in silence out of fear or ignorance.**

We have been infused with Spirit's gifts of **wisdom and courage.**

We are today and in this Eucharist given the **strength and nourishment** to tell this good news.

Let us go and tell the good news!