

A Convocation Reflection

[On this past November 30th and December 1st almost 800 parishioners from the dioceses of Fargo and Crookston attended a Convocation of Lay Leaders centered on the theme of re-igniting the fires of faith in the lives of our parishes and culture. St. Leo's and St. Thomas parishes had 9 parishioners attend this event. This week Jacob & Kelsey Lako offer this reflection about the Convocation.]

When we were first asked to attend the Convocation of Parish Leaders on behalf of St. Leo's we first felt a sense of pride and at the same time a little sense of fear. We felt a sense of pride due to being chosen for a special task and a sense of fear because on top of our everyday lives the idea of evangelizing seemed like a daunting task.

The speakers at the convocation quickly showed us how both feelings of pride and fear were a little misplaced. They helped us see that evangelization is a Christ given mission, not pastor or church given mission, but that Christ himself has called each of us to evangelize. So our pride quickly faded as we realized that this is not just our duty as a chosen representative of St. Leo's but that all of us lay people within our parishes are called to intentionally bring Christ to others.

Our fear of the idea of evangelizing was next to be dispelled. Maybe for you too it seems like such a scary word, evangelization? It is not meant to be another "task" in your day, it is not meant to make you busier than you already are, but it is about intentionally aiding others in our daily lives to encounter Christ. In other words, we need only to be aware that moments in our everyday life arise where we may have the opportunity to bring glory to God, to bring even a small piece of God to someone.

When living a life of intentional evangelization we need to be free of fear and pressure. We have felt this in our life with family members who have fallen away from the Church. We want them so badly to know Christ again or to make straight a misunderstanding they have of the Church, that sometimes conversations become pressured or pushy. We were reminded it is not of God if we feel the pressure to "fix" someone or push Christ on them. Being pushy or weird never brought anyone to the Church. But being authentic has! Be yourself. We needed to realize, just as much as you, that we are all unique and wonderful and have something to offer to another in encountering Christ. So as much as we want to be an instrument of evangelization we first need to ask Christ to heal us from any fear or pressure we may be feeling, and ask that He help us be authentic, our truest selves!

Do we make evangelizing harder than it is? Quite often yes. We feel we need to be an expert when it comes to evangelizing the Catholic faith, but really this is not necessary. Effective evangelization is not about our knowledge or facts about the church instead it's about our hearts and the love we have for Christ. The question was posed "How hard is it to talk about someone you love?" We talk with ease about our spouses or children whom we love dearly, so why should talking about Jesus in the same way be so difficult? Have our hearts truly fallen in love with Jesus in a deep and personal way? When they have, only then, will we be able to share Jesus Christ our beloved friend with others.

As we go forth bringing new ideas of how to be an evangelizing people, it is our earnest prayer that we all take steps to grow closer to Christ. Then as one body St. Leo's and the whole Catholic Church may effectively live our call to bring the love of God to the world.

Prayerfully yours,

Jacob and Kelsey Lako