

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 Shari Kensok offers this reflection about the Convocation.]

Recent popes (Pope Francis, Pope Benedict, Pope John Paul II and even back to Pope Paul VI!) have called for a **New Evangelization** especially for those Christians who have suffered a deep crisis of faith, often due to secularization of our culture. What's the Old Evangelization? Why do we need a New one? What is Evangelization, anyway?

Evangelization, simply put, is sharing the gospel of Jesus with others, and has been at the heart of the Catholic Church from its inception. Jesus gave the Great Commission—recorded in Matthew 28:18-20: “Then Jesus approached and said to them, ‘All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.’” That directive was not only meant for the apostles in the room with Jesus at the time; it is meant for us too! By virtue of our baptism, we share this mission. Jesus tells **US** to **Go! Make disciples! Teach!** And isn't it comforting to know that he is with us always?!

So, if that is our commission, from Jesus himself, why do we need a NEW Evangelization? Perhaps we have become a bit lax in our baptismal obligations; our contemporary popes have recognized, among other statistics, that only about a quarter of Catholics regularly attend mass on Sundays. The fires of our faith are growing cold, but the embers are still there. It is time to fan the flames, add some dried leaves and a little paper and throw on some kindling! (Can you tell I enjoy a good campfire?!) It is time to reignite the faith of our church!

So, what does this New Evangelization look like? The answer to that question is different for all of us, because God has given each of us different gifts and skills. We can, however, take a look at what Evangelization is NOT. Evangelization is NOT about being intelligent or brilliant, being preachy, being pushy or being strange. It is NOT simply about being good to people (although that goes a really long way!) or simply passing the faith on to our immediate family (although that is our first duty!). It is not another task to make us busier. **It IS about living out our daily lives, doing the things we do, through our daily activities with a further intention...to facilitate an encounter with Jesus Christ with others.** It's about using our own skills, however God has blessed us, doing the things we always do and enjoy doing, just with a further intention...

When Jesus called Matthew, the tax collector, as recorded in the Gospel of Luke (Chapter 5), Matthew “got up and followed him. Then Levi (Matthew) gave a great banquet for him (Jesus) in his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were at table with them.” That's all he did! It's not complicated! He did what he had probably done many times before, what he enjoyed doing, and what he was probably good at: he had his buddies over for dinner! Only this time, he did it with a further intention...to introduce his buddies to Jesus. That's all we need to do also; Jesus and the holy Spirit will do the rest!

When Fr. Ermer dismisses us from mass saying, “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life,” that is an invitation to **let the life you lead be a witness to your faith.**