

Dear Friends,

In 1992 the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops wrote a pastoral letter called GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES. This letter was written to address the need for evangelization in the Church in the United States. In this letter, the bishops came up with three very important goals we need to ponder.

To live faith more fully and joyfully – As baptized Catholics we are people called to live as followers, or disciples, of Jesus Christ. In order to follow Jesus, we need to know him and we must have the desire to follow him. I like to think I'm at least a pretty good homilist (I know, sometimes I talk too long, especially when I don't have notes). I hope that in my efforts to evangelize I am helping people to know Jesus Christ at least a little better. Nothing is as valuable as actually reading and praying with the Gospels though. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John really do tell us about who Jesus Christ is and they challenge us to look at our commitment to following him and learning from him. Remember, disciples are, first and foremost, students. Are we willing to learn about who Jesus Christ is? Are we willing to follow him more fully and with joy in our souls?

To invite others to hear the good news and share our faith – “Would you like to go to Mass with me?” “The parish is offering an adult education class on respect for human life, would you like to go?” “We have Mass every day of the week and on Tuesdays we go to breakfast, would you be interested in coming along?” I love to celebrate the Eucharist in our parish. Those who attend Mass on a regular basis do so with an authentic faith that is beautiful, and humbling to witness. I have had a lot of conversations with parishioners all over the diocese, parents whose grown children have stopped going to Mass. I have heard their pain. I have seen their tears. I don't understand exactly why people don't attend Mass. I would guess there are as many reasons for not going as there are people who stay away. But do we just leave them? Do we as a Church stop caring for them? Do we stop praying for them? Do we cease to invite them to be with us as a faith community? I cannot help but think that the best way for people to know Christ is by hearing him invite them, and welcome them, to join us. Remember, as members of the Church, we are members of the Body of Christ. Christ acts through us every time we act in His name.

To foster values for the transformation of the world – In a lot of ways we can look at the world and find a lot of reasons to feel that changing it is just too hard. Besides, people don't like change very much anyway, so why not be satisfied with the status quo? It is so much easier to believe that it's best to not ruffle feathers or cause waves. However, evangelization is all about proclaiming the good news of God's love to the world; it is about proclaiming the Gospel. God's Word has a way of breaking through to our hearts, and when that happens, everything changes in our lives. So, evangelization, which is best summed up in Matthew 28:19 where it says, “**Go**

and make disciples of all the nations", is all about ruffling feathers and causing waves. If we as a Church do not cause a stir in peoples' lives we are not doing our jobs.

Evangelization is all about giving people an experience of the Word of God made flesh in the life of Jesus Christ. We are his life, the Gospel is his word. We have so much work to do and I don't know that I am all that effective as an evangelist – especially if it is my job alone, then I most definitely am not going to be effective. We have a wonderful staff here at St. Catherine Parish and I am amazed at the hard work and dedication I've seen in their efforts to evangelize. However, we are all being called to live our faith more fully and joyfully, to invite others to hear the good news, and to foster values that will bring about a transformation of the world. Now is not the time for us to remain silent about our faith. Now is a time for us to proclaim the Good News of God's love to the world.

A good place for us to start is with the students who are being confirmed this weekend. They are making a powerful statement to us about their desire to live their Catholic faith, and I congratulate them for choosing to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation. It is my hope and prayer that they will apply what they have been taught to their faith lives. Their catechists have worked very hard, with tremendous dedication, enthusiasm and joy in their efforts to teach those who are to be confirmed about what it means to live as Catholics and Christians in the world. I hope that this class will continue to be enthusiastic about how they live their faith in this community. I hope this confirmation class understands that we need their presence, their joy and enthusiasm. I hope this class realizes that they have much to offer the Church and that we will gladly welcome anything they are willing to do. We need more lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Eucharist, musicians, and catechists in our religious education programs. We need young people to get involved in parish councils and commissions. We need the youthful hopes and dreams of the newly confirmed. Their gifts of the Holy Spirit will do so much to enliven our faith community.

In joyful hope,

Fr. Tim Seigel