

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Evangelisation: A call for all!

Dear friends in Christ Jesus,

We began our Lenten journey with a wonderful reflection by Fr Gerard on the important role of evangelisation in our life as followers of Christ. He shared with us the challenging life of St Francis Xavier, one of the greatest missionaries ever, and invited us to deeply experience the call of Christ for each of us, to become his missionary disciples and establish an everyday encounter with Christ our Lord, recognising his hungering and longing for each of us. In his homily, he drew inspiration from the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola and helped us reflect on, ***“What have we done for Christ?” “What are we doing for Christ?” “What more will we do for Christ?”*** Last week, Sue Cawley, our parish evangelization co-ordinator shared her reflections, appreciating the great and generous work we do here in this parish and invited us to reflect further on ***“What more can we, as a parish community, do for Christ?”*** Today, we continue our reflection on Evangelisation, as a call for all baptized in Christ, and the need to respond to this call in an effective way in our everyday life!

In the first reading today from the book of Exodus, we listened to the call of Moses. Moses being called by God to be sent on a mission to deliver His people from the hands of the Egyptians. When Moses sees the burning bush and goes forward to look, God calls to him and says, “Come no nearer. Take off your shoes.” Before encountering God in the burning bush, Moses is asked to take off his shoes, because they prevented him from drawing nearer to God. On our journey of evangelisation, this encounter with God is very vital my dear brothers and sisters. But, there are many things that prevent us, like Moses, from drawing near to God and experiencing that personal encounter. St Ignatius of Loyola, in his Spiritual Exercises (Sp. Ex: 1), invites the one entering into the Spiritual Exercises to ***“get rid of all inordinate attachments, and, after their removal, of seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul.”***

Evangelisation as envisioned in our parish is a spiritual journey. As we enter into this important spiritual journey, we need to get rid of all inordinate attachments that prevent us from encountering Christ our Lord, in order to proclaim him effectively. What we need to experience in the first place is a conversion of heart. Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium: The Joy of the Gospel*, invites every parish to ***“devote the necessary effort to advancing along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion.”*** This pastoral and missionary conversion becomes possible only when we experience a conversion of heart. Evangelisation is a call for all. And so, all of us individually and collectively as members of this wonderful parish need to enter into a conversion process. It is very true that our parish is very gifted in so many ways. We are all blessed by an increasing number of faithful, our church is always full, our liturgy is vibrant, our social outreach is extraordinary and our love for the Lord is admirable. However, we cannot deny the reality that there is so much we can do to become more missionary in our pastoral outreach, in order to make more disciples for Christ.

In the Gospel today, we hear the call to repentance. The parable of the fig tree presents to us the reality that the Lord gives us all, many chances to repent and bear fruit in abundance. During this special season of grace, as we make more effort to repent and renew our life, the call to

conversion is very important on our journey of as evangelisers. Pope Francis writes, **“In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. Each particular Church, as a portion of the Catholic Church under the leadership of its bishop, is likewise called to missionary conversion.”** Charity begins at home. In order to become effective evangelisers in the world today, we need to become evangelisers in our own parish.

In our parish, undoubtedly, as we begin this spiritual journey of becoming an evangelizing community, we all need a conversion of heart from all inordinate attachments that prevent us from encountering Christ. We need a conversion of heart from a culture of self-centeredness towards a culture of other-centeredness. There are moments in life, when we find ourselves caught up in selfishness, failing to care for the other members of our own parish community. We need a conversion of heart from a culture of narrow-mindedness towards a culture of broad-mindedness. Yes dear friends, we live in a community, which is multi-cultural. There are many aspects to appreciate in each culture, but very often, we tend to get caught up in our own linguistic, cultural groups and become narrow-minded, failing to appreciate the other cultures. Being broad-minded and openness to others, create a wonderful gateway through which to enter and begin our journey as evangelisers. We all need to experience conversion - from a culture of finding fault with others, towards a culture of finding goodness in others. Finding fault with the priests, finding fault with the altar servers, finding fault with others is very easy and we happily do that. But dear friends, we fail to examine how much we really see goodness in others. Seeing goodness in everyone and everything is an important element of evangelising. In the beginning of creation, “God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Gen 1: 31). We all need to experience conversion - from a culture of spreading gossip, towards a culture of spreading the Gospel. Yes, dear friends, so much gossip is in the air and it pollutes the hearts of the faithful. Gossip spreads faster than the Gospel! Instead of spreading gossip, can we all consciously make an effort to spread the Gospel? We all need a conversion of heart from a culture of hatred, towards a culture of love. Let us remember the invitation, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God” (1 Jn 4: 7). When we develop love for one another, all other evils in our hearts, disappear.

This conversion of heart dear brothers and sisters will lead us to true communion in Christ. Yes, dear friends, St Paul in today’s second reading so beautifully reminds us how our fathers “all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink” and likewise we, who have been baptized in Christ, share in the same spiritual food and spiritual drink of His most precious body and blood and taking part in this communion every day, leads us into intimate communion with the person of Christ. Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est: God is love* writes, **“Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”** Our conversion of heart should lead us to intimate communion with Christ our Lord.

When we encounter Christ in intimate communion, we cannot but speak about him my dear friends. And so, our communion should lead us to conversation. When we deeply love someone, that person fills our thoughts and our conversations. When we deeply love Christ, He somehow or the other comes into our everyday conversation. Just a few days back, I was out for lunch with some friends, one was a Catholic and other two were Muslims. As we began

eating, that Catholic friend of mine started reciting the prayer before meals and through the course of the conversation, she so eagerly spoke of her encounter with Christ to those Muslim friends. Is it not a wonderful way of spreading our faith? Spiritual conversation was very important to St. Ignatius' mission in the Society of Jesus. He specifically states in the Jesuit Constitutions that spiritual conversation is one of the apostolic works of the Society. The invitation to engage in spiritual conversation is not just limited to Jesuits but to everyone who has encountered Christ. Can God have a place in our conversation with our children, our young people at home, in our church, and with friends in the work place, perhaps even at times, with strangers on the streets?

This conversation is a means of communication. We communicate the richness of God's love to the wider world. Gone are the days, when only a selected few had the privilege of spreading messages through media. Now, thanks to technology, every one of us has the chance to spread the Good News in and through different forms of media. We have vibrant young people and young adults in our parish, who use the many forms of media as a powerful instrument to communicate God to the world. Instead of spreading so many unnecessary things, can we spread something about God and communicate to the whole world, how great and awesome our God is!

Dear friends, Pope Benedict XVI in his letter (29 June 2007) to the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean wrote, **“knowing Jesus Christ by faith is our joy; following him is a grace and passing on this treasure to others is a task entrusted to us by the Lord, in calling and choosing us.”** Evangelisation is not an invitation restricted to a selected few. No, it is for all of us, the Lord has called and chosen each of us individually to spread the Good News. We live in a place where there are people from many faiths and they may not all encounter our God, but they encounter us. Let us remember that “We are the Bibles the world is reading; We are the creeds the world is needing; We are the sermons the world is heeding.” Pope Francis writes that **“An evangelising community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. 1 Jn4:19), and therefore we can move forward (No. 24 Evangelii Gaudium)”** It is the Lord who has taken this initiative, dear brothers and sisters in Christ. It is He who calls us to begin this journey of Evangelisation in our parish and we rely totally on His divine Providence and pray that He continues to lead us on, revealing His Glory here on earth.

Let our conversion of heart lead us into deeper communion with our Lord and let our communion with our Lord, lead us all, to spiritual conversations about our Lord and let our spiritual conversations about our Lord lead us to communication of His Good News in our world!

St Anselm's Catholic Church
In the Parish Centre



A Lenten Reflection

What it
means
to
follow
Jesus
today.....

Evangelisation: a call for all!

How can we collectively respond to this call effectively in our everyday life?

-Thayriam, SJ

Evangelisation@ St Anselm's

Saturday 6th April 2019
10.00 a.m. -12.00 p.m.