

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today is the 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time and Catechetical Sunday. Also, today our Sunday morning religious education program for grade school students who do not attend Little Flower Catholic School resumes. We want to welcome all of our religious education students, their parents, and their catechists to this important program.

Our life is a journey of faith that began on the day we were born and will continue until the day we die. For most of us, our faith goes through four phases. When we are children, our faith is the faith of our family. As we get a little older, our faith is the faith of the community of which we are part. When we are adolescents and young adults, we enter into a questioning faith. As adults, ideally we make our faith our own. However, the journey remains a lifelong journey.

In a way, this is exemplified in today's Gospel. Jesus began by asking his disciples who people said he was. They responded, "John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the other prophets." He then asked them who did they said he was. Peter responded for them, "You are the Christ." In other words, he asked them to move from the faith of others to personal faith.

In Mark's Gospel, before ascending into heaven, Jesus sent out his apostles: "*Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature*" [16:15]. Evangelization is the essential mission of the Church.

The theme for this year's Catechetical Sunday is "Catechists and Teachers as Agents of the New Evangelization." The last couple of years we have heard the phrase *New Evangelization* frequently. What is the New Evangelization? Traditionally, evangelization introduced and proclaimed Christ to those who did not know him.

...the New Evangelization instead addresses baptized Catholics who are absent, inactive, or alienated. Pope Benedict describes the New Evangelization as an opportunity to "repropose" the faith to those who are convinced they already know it and for whom faith holds no interest. The New Evangelization asks believers to creatively retell the story of faith for this time and place to engage and reignite the faith among all Catholics.¹

There are four theological principles undergirding the New Evangelization:

1. "Soteriological Principle: God desires all to be saved and reach the full knowledge of truth (1 Tm 2:2-4). Salvation of souls is the goal of evangelization."
2. "Christological Principle: Jesus Christ is the definitive revelation of God. There is no salvation apart from Jesus Christ."
3. "Ecclesiological Principle: Jesus Christ established the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church as the definitive means to experience God and to achieve salvation."

¹Barbara Humphrey McCrabb, "Found It," (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012), p. 1.

4. “Anthropological Principle: Evangelization is the means by which men and women truly become themselves.”²

On a more practical level, John and Therese Boucher argue that “evangelizing means consciously opening doors that can lead to new faith for inactive Catholics. It means identifying, strengthening, and successfully using seven doors into parish life, or seven complimentary stages in the parish evangelization process.” If we want to evangelize or re-evangelize people, we first need to befriend people, share faith stories with them, tell the story of Jesus Christ, invite them to conversion, welcome them into the community, and finally invite them to stewardship.³

My brothers and sisters, Pope Benedict XVI has proclaimed a Year of Faith from October 11, 2012 to November 24, 2013. This is in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the convening of the Second Vatican Council and the 20th anniversary of the promulgation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. To effectively evangelize or re-evangelize others, we all need to grow in our faith in Jesus Christ and in our participation in his holy Catholic Church.

²Fr. James A. Wehner, STD, “A Primer on the Theology of Evangelization: Implications for the United States,” (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012), p. 6.

³John and Therese Boucher, “Keys for Welcoming Catholics Back to the Lord’s Table,” (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012), p.’s 1f.