

3rd Sunday of Easter - C
Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41;
Revelation 5:11-14;
John 21:1-19
Little Flower - 5/1/22

My Brothers and Sisters,

During the Easter Season, the first reading at all Sunday Masses comes from the Acts of the Apostles. Most of these readings recount the preaching of the Apostles and the acceptance or rejection of their teaching by the authorities and the people. In today's reading from Acts, the apostles told the Sanhedrin that they were compelled to obey God rather than men. The Sanhedrin had them punished and ordered them a second time to stop speaking in the name of Jesus.

Every year our Lenten journey climaxes on Holy Saturday when we celebrate Jesus' passage through death to life and the baptism, confirmation, and First Eucharist of our Elect. For the next few months, we will be gathering the names of possible catechumens, candidates, and *confirmandi*. After Labor Day, RCIA will begin again.

By our baptism, but especially by our confirmation, we are all called to share the Good News of Jesus with others, i.e., to invite others to come to Christ and the Church. However, unlike the apostles, because of the First Amendment to our Constitution, we know that we will not be persecuted for practicing or sharing our faith.

Many of you probably have never thought about how many people you may have brought to the Church. Marriage, for example, often brings non-Catholics to Christ or, at least, to the Catholic Church. In fact, in the past, marriage led more people to join the Catholic Church than anything else. Marriage still leads people to the Church, but, unfortunately, today marriage also causes some Catholics to leave the Catholic Church. All of you who are parents and have baptized and raised your children Catholic have carried on the ministry and mission of the apostles. Likewise, I am sure that over the years, some of you have helped lead friends, co-workers, or neighbors to Christ and/or the Church, sometimes without even knowing it. Conversely, if we do not practice our faith or do not live Gospel values, not only do we not lead people to Christ and the Church, we also create barriers that hinder them from coming to Christ and the Church.

If we have a weakness as Catholics, it is that we are often reluctant to talk about our faith or religion. Several years ago, I had a conversation with one of my classmates from Little Flower. When we started talking about our roots here at Little Flower, she told me an interesting story about her father.

Her mother was Catholic; her father was non-Catholic. Several years after her mother died, her father informed the children that he was becoming Catholic. His comment to them was, "Since I knew I was getting older, I also knew I needed to stop waiting for you to invite me to become Catholic." They were surprised and felt terrible! Their father had never shown any interest in becoming Catholic. They thought they were respecting his beliefs by not saying anything.

My brothers and sisters, I wonder how many people are waiting for us to ask them at least to consider becoming Catholic. How many are waiting for an invitation? Some years ago, the National Office for Evangelization reported that one predictor of people falling away from the Church was the failure to register in a parish. Because of mobility, people often believe that there is no point in registering since they will not be in the parish long enough to invest in it. According to the report, after two or three moves, they stop going to church. Therefore, we might also want to invite Catholics who are not attending church to come to church with us or Catholics who have not registered to register and to become part of our parish family.