

Opening Prayer: Let us pray

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

You have an outline for this talk and so you need not be concerned about taking notes. The entire presentation can be downloaded from our Parish Website.

From the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew:

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority 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 lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." Matthew 28:16-20

Go, Baptize and Teach and I will be with you.....

This portion of the Gospel according to St. Matthew is known as the Great Commission. We hear the Lord proclaim His authority and then transfer the authority to the Apostles and through them to the Church. During this Synod we will be reflecting upon this action and asking why the Lord did this? What it means to us today and how we can accomplish the task that is so obviously laid before us.

There are three movements to this action; **Go....Baptize..... and Teach.** Each of the component parts is important and each deserves individual consideration. I will be talking with you this morning about the first component part.

Later today, Dean Gross will talk about the Command to Baptize and how the Sacramental life of the church and the orders of ministry work in a coordinated effort to accomplish this task. Finally, Dean Burgett will talk about the Command to teach and how the Church on all levels should work to equip all the Baptized for ministry.

Go and make disciples, but what if we don't want to go? We are not all called to be a primary Evangelist, not all of us are St. Paul or even Billy Graham, but all of us are called evangelist and all are to take seriously this command of the Lord.

How do we understand the command of the Lord that we should GO!

Going involves **work...risk...uncertainty...and fear.** The work is involved both about the preparation and the actual efforts we make. The risk is about change and that is always difficult for human beings to accept. The uncertainty is found in the lack of guaranteed results, we just don't know how people will react to our best efforts. And finally there is the fear.

What is it we fear? Rejection is part of the fear, embarrassment over “being religious” is part of the fear and finally not knowing all the answers or being asked a question we can’t answer is part of our fear.

Which leads us the first question of the day?

It is the big question and the most important one for us to keep in focus not just during this Synod, but everyday of our life.

Why should we engage in this activity? Why should we go, baptize and teach?

The answer is simple, The Lord commanded us to do so and when we follow this command, He promised to be with us.

Being with the Lord is the goal; of every Christian Disciple and here we have a sure method of being in His presence and working with Him. That would seem to diminish our fears and reluctance to consider Evangelism part of our Christian Obligation.

Which brings us to the second question, how? How do we accomplish this activity? What are we to do and how are we to do it?

This is my part of the presentation for this Synod. I will touch upon the other two components, but will leave the details to be filled in by Deans Gross and Burgett. Primarily I want to offer to you a framework, an outline that you can take back to your parish, fill in the details and adapt the process to your particular situation.

When we think of Evangelism many differ ideas will come to our minds. We may first think of the witness at the door, usually at dinner time interrupting us and being somewhat obnoxious.

A large tent erected outside of town and the preacher spouting warning about hellfire and brimstone.

We may think the ever present Mormons on their bicycles or the fellow at work that just won’t take no for an answer about visiting the Kingdom Hall.

Is this Evangelism? Yes and No. Yes, if the people involved have good intentions in their hearts and not acting either from fear or greed and No, if their actions actually repel people from knowing and loving the Lord. Let’s consider what we find distasteful about each of these activities and why it conflicts with our understanding of Christianity.

In the first case we have people going door to door offering literature and repeating a memorized speech about their church and the need for salvation. **Now I know I'm weird, you don't need to tell me that, but have you ever tried to talk to one of those people?**

I have and the result was startling. They kept repeating the same phrases they had memorized and had no in dept knowledge of their church or Christianity. Clearly, I would say they had not been equipped to be Evangelist.

An Evangelist has three characteristics.

The first and most important is that an evangelist is called by God to be an Evangelist. Most of us are not called to the work of a Primary Evangelist most find that a great relief. (I really didn't want to go door to door anyway)

However, not being a Primary Evangelist does not mean that we are not called to be engaged in the work of an evangelist, it may be that we are called to be a passive evangelist or a witness to our faith. ***But more on that in a few moments.....***

The Second characteristic is that the individual has the ability and the desire to learn their faith so that they are capable of teaching and communicating the basic Christian Beliefs in a simple and easy to understand way.

This is not only about intellectual ability, but also the availability of educational opportunities and the time to pursue this activity.

Finally, the evangelist will have zeal for the vocation.

Evangelistic Zeal is not something that can be taught, controlled or coordinated with our life's plans. If God is calling us we do not know when or how this drive to proclaim Him will occur or how it will be expressed.

Like the young person in love the evangelist is filled with a burning desire to be with his love and to tell the world about his love.

Now it's important that we define what Evangelization is and is not. What about the Tent Preacher or the Jehovah Witness? What are they doing and are they actually being evangelistic?

Evangelism is about an invitation to begin a journey of faith that will encompass and individual's intellect, emotions and eventually become a relationship centered in the Divine Love.

Sadly, when we examine many attempts to elicit conversion to a particular religious sect we find coercion and misinformation at the center. Many have found themselves seeking to be saved and yet found the experience empty, because the motivation was fear rather than the impelling Grace of the Divine Love.

So how are we, as Anglicans, to understand evangelism? How do we organize our thoughts and how do we begin to think of each of us having a role in the process of evangelism in our parish?

The first step is to recognize why we are engaging in this activity. We are not engaging in the proclamation of the Gospel, **(for that is Evangelism)**, to increase the size of our church. Neither are we evangelizing to increase the weekly pledge payments nor to get more people involved in the church so that our work load will be lightened.

All of those things may happen, but our only purpose can be to proclaim the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ that those who hear and believe will find Salvation. **Because when that is our motivation; the Lord has promised to be with us and to bless the work of our hands.**

So where do we begin?

Technically, Evangelism has two separate but interrelated movements. There is the internal movement which is followed by the external movement.

The internal movement is about the individual who is already a believer and is willing to examine and consider his role in the church and the world. **The internal movement is about preparation, study, prayer and a heart willing to test our vocation.**

I mentioned earlier that many who are called evangelist or missionaries simply spout a prepared text rather than having the knowledge to really engage in a discussion of faith. They have accepted the premise that everyone in the church is to spend X amount of time working as an evangelist or going door to door for the good of the church.

Their preparation may have seemed detailed, what pamphlet or what Biblical Text to quote, but the connection between their personal belief and their religious knowledge may or may not have been made.

Now here is a disclaimer or a warning – I am not saying that everyone needs to feel comfortable about answering every question about their faith.....the church..... or the structure of the church to be an evangelist. In fact no one is comfortable or has all that knowledge. If we were suppose to know or remember everything why would we have libraries, teachers or resource people to call upon.

And there has to be for every Primary Evangelist a support crew of passive evangelists.

There are the hospitality people, the Sunday School Teachers, Musicians and Acolytes. The ushers and greeters and everyone else in the church that smiles at new people or invites someone to coffee hour, these are the support crew, the passive evangelist.

In other words not everyone is called to exercise the ministry of an evangelist as we might have traditionally understood that ministry, but each of us is called to be the evangelist that God is calling us to be.

The issue for us to consider about the internal movement is: will we avail ourselves to those opportunities to grow in our spiritual life, our religious education and we make time for prayer and the contemplative study of our faith?

When we do so we will find that we can articulate clearly what we believe and why. This internal movement is about the opportunities we have to grow in our faith in our particular parish and our attitudes we have about taking advantage of those opportunities.

We may not all be eloquent speakers, we may not use the same language or terminology, but we will be able to explain to another human being about the relationship we have with the Lord, why it is important to us and how the church helps that relationship grow.

At that moment we have moved from the internal movement of evangelism to the external movement.

That movement has not been made by our conscious efforts, but through our commitment and the Grace of the Holy Spirit.

Now let's begin to move from the theoretical to the practical side of evangelism.

What we are going to do in the next few minutes is to begin together the process that each of you will continue during the workshop portion of this presentation. Our idea is that at your tables gathered by parishes you can begin to form your plans for your parish to move forward to proclaim the Gospel in your home towns.

St. Paul teaches us that there are a variety of gifts, but that each is given for a singular purpose – to build up the Body of Christ that is the Church.

If any church was made up of only those called to be active in primary evangelism, who would make the coffee? Who would teach and preach? Who would celebrate the Sacraments, visit the sick and shut-ins or volunteer to help in the nursery. Each of these components is essential to our effort to be an evangelistic community for without each of them and many more our efforts will be difficult or impossible.

What we need to do is begin to organize and develop a way of thinking about how we evangelize and what roles we play as individuals and what vocations we need to seek or develop in our parishes.

On the last page of your notes of for this section is an outline of the process you will be following:

We are going to take a trip. We are going to plan the trip (What we are doing here). We are going to acquire all the supplies we need for the trip. We are then going to evaluate the feasibility of taking the trip and finally we are going to make a commitment to take the trip, enjoy the travel and the destination.

We will have a few minutes for each question to begin the planning- then you will finish at home

In the Great Commission the Lord commanded us to do three things: Go, Baptize and Teach. The trip we are going to take is going – looking outward. The Lord did not tell us “if you build it they will come” No, He told us that we should Go and when we Go He will be with us, so let’s begin to plan.

Let’s do the first section together:

Workshop Trip Plan

I. Deciding to go on the trip. How do we as a parish make the decision and commitment to work on a plan for being and becoming an Evangelical Community? (e.g. we need to share this information with the whole parish – how do we do that?)

- What are the positive aspects of our church growing and more folks joining us? (e.g. new people will bring more energy to the church and other new people)
- What are the negative aspects of having more people at Church? (e.g. – new people could bring new ideas or might sit in my pew or might even have children)
- Are these actually negative or are they more opportunities to proclaim the Gospel and increase the number of Christian Disciples? (e.g. churches with young families are growing churches and attract other young families)

2. What is the condition of our Travel Vehicle? What about your church attracts people? What is detracting people? What do you need to fix, and how can do that? (e.g. we used to have Sunday School in the basement, but it kind of damp down there)

3. How the engine in your vehicle? (Your Priest?) What can you expect your priest to do? How can you help your priest? (e.g. We have an older part time priest – he can’t do a lot of visiting beyond seeing the sick and shut-ins – so you form a committee of lay people to visit all the visitors to your parish)

4. What map are you going to follow? There are thousands of books on church growth and evangelism, which one is right? How about the oldest, The Bible – read Acts and the Letters of St. Paul. What did they do?

5. What can we expect to see on our trip? What may be an unexpected event during our trip? (What preparations do you need in place before you begin this process? What kinds and types of information do you need?) e.g. Church Information packages – see the examples on the St. Dunstan’s Table

6. What are people looking for in a church? The best survey material tells us the people are looking for a Christ Centered, family oriented, Biblically based Church – they want

it to be large enough, but not so large that they feel lost. (Doesn't this describe the Anglican Church?)

7. What are we going to do on the trip? Hike, fish, sightsee..... (What is the ministry of your church?) Every church has a primary ministry to be the Church, Celebrate the Sacraments and to work for the Salvation of souls, but what about the ministry that you do to accomplish those ends? (e.g. a daycare center for children – an after school program?)