



Seek the Lord

ARCHBISHOP DENNIS M. SCHNURR

In his homily for the opening of the 13th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Pope Benedict XVI said, “The Church exists to evangelize. Faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ’s command, his disciples went out to the whole world to announce the Good News, spreading Christian communities everywhere” (Homily, Oct. 7, 2012). The Catholic Church is thus missionary in nature, responding to the Great Commission given by the Lord to His apostles as He ascended into heaven: “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Mt. 28:19).

Jesus sends His followers *out*. He did not envision a community of believers focused inward on itself or content remaining within the safety and comfort of the walls of their churches. That same desire of the Lord still holds. He calls us to *share* the Good News of salvation. This is not done through the repetition of doctrine or by quoting paragraphs from a catechism. A disciple is one who has heard the call of the Lord and responds to that call by choosing to conform his or her life daily to the teachings and example of Jesus. A disciple heeds the Lord’s command to take up one’s cross and follow Him. Ultimately, a disciple attracts others to discipleship by inviting them to know and follow Jesus through prayer, the Scriptures and the Sacraments. Everything we do as a Church should support the mission given to us by Jesus to make and form disciples.

This missionary impulse distinguishes the Church from charitable organizations and social clubs. We would do well to constantly evaluate whether the many activities that typically take place in our parishes support the evangelizing mission of the Church. Each of the services, programs and events we run through our parish communities ought to have

the goal of bringing people closer to Christ and helping them with the daily work of converting their hearts and minds to the Lord. If we find ourselves engaged in parish endeavors that don’t support this work, then we run the risk of losing sight of the mission Christ has called us to share with Him.

While there are many ways at the parish or archdiocesan level in which we work together to fulfill the evangelizing mission of the Church, our individual pursuit of holiness also comes into play. The more united each of us is to Christ, the greater the effects of His grace, including our witness to others.

Pope Benedict also reflected on the importance of striving for personal holiness in his homily for the synod’s opening in 2012. He said holy people “are the true actors in evangelization in all its expressions. In a special way they are even pioneers and bringers of the new evangelization: with their intercession and the example of lives attentive to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they show the beauty of the Gospel to those who are indifferent or even hostile, and they invite, as it were tepid believers, to live with the joy of faith, hope and charity, to rediscover the taste for the word of God and for the sacraments, especially for the bread of life, the Eucharist... Holiness is not confined by cultural, social, political or religious barriers. Its language, that of love and truth, is understandable to all people of good will and it draws them to Jesus Christ, the inexhaustible source of new life.”

Through our individual pursuit of holiness and our work together as a Church, may we always dedicate ourselves to the Great Commission of bringing others to know, love and follow the Lord!