

Why Should We Evangelize?

At the end of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus gave the Church the unending task of evangelizing to stir and to stimulate all its actions until all nations have heard his Good News and until every person has become his disciple.

The Lord commanded us to evangelize because salvation is offered to every person in him. More than a holy figure or a prophet, Jesus is God's Word. He is our Savior. Becoming like us and accepting our human nature, he addresses in himself, in his death and resurrection, the brokenness of our lives. He suffers through our sin; he feels our pain; he knows the thirst of our death; he accepts the limits of our human life so that he might bring us beyond those limits. "He humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him!" Taking on our death as Savior, Jesus was raised to life. In Christ, all can come to know that the sin, the indifference, the despair, and the doubt of our lives are overcome by God's taking on our human nature and leading us to new life. In him, and him alone, is the promise of resurrection and new life.

We evangelize because people must be brought to the salvation that Jesus the Lord offers in and through the Church. While we acknowledge that the grace of God is mysteriously present in all lives, people all too often resist this grace. They refuse change and repentance. We evangelize so that the salvation of Christ Jesus, which transforms our human lives even now, will bring as many as possible to the promised life of unending happiness in heaven.

Jesus commanded us to evangelize, too. The Lord Jesus, "the way and the truth and the life," came to us as a teacher, opening for us the wisdom that leads to eternal life. Unless people know the grandeur for which they are made, they cannot reach fulfillment and their lives will be incomplete. Nor will they know that they are called into interpersonal union with God and with each other. This is the union in which Jesus wishes all to share, a union that brings great peace to people, families, and societies.

The Lord gave us a message that is unique. All faiths are not merely different versions of the same thing. Knowing Christ Jesus and belonging to his Church are not the same as believing anything else and belonging to any other community. Pope John Paul II has pointed out, "While acknowledging that God loves all people and grants them the possibility of being saved (cf. 1 Tm 2:4), the Church believes that God has established Christ as the one mediator and that she herself has been established as the universal sacrament of salvation."

Finally, the Lord gave us yet another reason to evangelize: our love for every person, whatever his or her situation, language, physical, mental, or social condition. Because we have experienced the love of Christ, we want to share it. The gifts God has given to us are not gifts for ourselves. Like the large catch of fish or the overflowing measure of flour, faith makes our hearts abound with a love-filled desire to bring all people to Jesus' Gospel and to the table of the Eucharist. As Jesus wanted to gather all Jerusalem, "as a hen gathers her young," so also do we want to gather all people into God's kingdom, proclaiming the Gospel even "to the ends of the earth."