

De Sales

SPIRITUALITY CENTER

"Extra, extra: Share All About it!!!"



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Mary D. Ford

"Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen. Jesus said to them: "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to all creation." (Mark 16: 14—15)

These are Jesus' parting words to his closest friends. These are Jesus' parting words to those with whom he entrusted his message of salvation and redemption.

What was Jesus saying to them? What is Jesus saying to us?

When we consider the mandate to "go into the world and preach the Good News to all creation" we are speaking of *evangelization*. In On Evangelization in the Modern World, Pope Paul VI says that evangelization "means bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new."

Reflecting on Pope Paul VI's definition, Paulist Fathers Frank DeSiano, CSP and Kenneth Boyack, CSP, write: "If evangelization is the transformation of human nature by the proclamation of the Good News, if it is directed toward individuals and toward societies, if it is dealing with par-

ticular lives and whole environments, it would seem to cover just about everything." (The Evangelizing Parish, page 25.)

Sharing the Good News of salvation and redemption ultimately involves everything. Evangelization ultimately involves everyone.

Like the Eleven, sometimes we stubbornly refuse to believe that each of us has a role to play in God's plan of salvation. We stubbornly believe that sharing the Good News is only for a special few. We stubbornly believe that evangelization is for priests, nuns, brothers, missionaries or for others who make it a full-time job in obscure corners of the world.

Each and every one of us is called to share the Good News of Jesus. However, the ways in which we evangelize must fit the state and stage of life in which we find ourselves. In other words, while all of us are called to evangelize, each of us must do it in ways particular to our circumstances, responsibilities and relationships.

In the Salesian tradition, evangelization is really about the practice of devotion: transforming our own thoughts, feelings, attitudes and actions with the love of God. For most of us, evangelization is less about "preaching" and

more about being perfected: "It does no harm whatsoever, but instead perfects all things...So every vocation becomes more agreeable: care of one's family, love of husband or wife, service to others, and every type of employment." (Introduction to the Devout Life, Book One, Chapter 3)

Simply put, evangelization is not about bringing God to a place or to people where God is not already present. No, sharing the Good News is reminding ourselves and others—in word, in attitude, in actions—of a God who is always present. Francis de Sales tells us: "Not only is God in the place where you are, but also in your heart, in the very center of your spirit."

Evangelization is about living in the truth that God is always calling us to be more of who and how God created us to be. The truth is that Christ's redeeming love has opened up the world of love to us. The truth is that the Spirit dwells within us—and among us—to transform us, helping us to make real on earth something of the justice and peace, the community and the communion of God's Kingdom.

That's very Good News! How can we own it—and share it?

Today?