

Every once in a while, I find it necessary to use a word in a homily that can strike apprehension, perhaps even fear and misunderstanding in the heart of the Catholic.

I suppose I should just come out and say it:

Evangelization. There. I said it! It felt a little awkward, but now that the word is out there, I'll say it again: Evangelization!

Evangelization is what St. Paul speaks of today when he says:

**“...when God, who from my mother’s womb had set me apart and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim Him to the Gentiles”**

Ever since the risen Lord sent out His disciples to make disciples of all nations, the Catholic Church has engaged in what we would call “missionary activity”, the evangelization of those who do not yet know Christ so that local Churches could come to birth in their midst, so that Christ can be more fully known.

But the way we speak of this mission has changed over time. In fact for about 15 centuries the word “mission” was not used at all to refer to this activity.

And even though the New Testament speaks of evangelizing or announcing the Gospel, the noun “Evangelization” began to be used by Catholics only about 50 years ago.

Now we are hearing it said in a fresher way. It was Blessed Pope John Paul II who officially introduced the concept of “new evangelization” into the Catholic Church’s vocabulary.

Why call it “new”?

We proclaim Jesus Christ just as the first Apostles did.

So Evangelization is not at all new.

What are new are the “immediate need” to evangelize and the “new” means available to us for this task.

First then let’s look at the need:

In the past 50 years, we have witnessed the decline of people’s perceived need for God.

In our own United States, a country founded on the principle that we are accountable to God and a belief that our nation was established by God for a noble purpose, even the mention of God in our schools, our courts and in many ways, our daily discourse has been under attack.

Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life has been relegated to just another way, just another truth and is considered an unwelcome intrusion into many lives.

In the past 50 years, the raising up of solid, well founded Catholic children has been hampered, even subverted by poor catechetical instruction in both the classrooms and from the pulpit.

Church attendance in the United States and in Europe is at an all time low.

That’s the bad news. The good news is that we don’t have to stay that way.

That brings us to the new means of evangelization.

We are no longer isolated from the rest of the world. We have, and are dependent upon, a global economy. We live in a time where communication is not only international, but instant.

Radio and television, newspapers and magazines are no longer the first choice in global or even local communication. E-mail, instant messaging, texting, internet blogs and discussion groups reign.

Facebook and Twitter has laid out for millions of people a grid for communication with a scope that was not even imagined 50 years ago.

Catholics around the world have been given a universal catechism so that we might better know and explain and live our faith.

And, at least in this part of the country, we still talk to our neighbors and friends whenever we meet them. This is not new, but I mention it because it is still the most effective.

So, my friends, we can see the need for bringing Christ to others and we have the means to do so.

So why bother? One word can answer that question. Love.

Today's Gospel tells us:

**When the Lord saw her, he was moved with pity (that is, love) for her and said to her, "Do not weep."**

**He stepped forward and touched the coffin; at this the bearers halted, and he said, "Young man, I tell you, arise!" The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.**

We Catholic Christians who seek a relationship with the Risen Christ know the truth of that day: That when Jesus touches a situation, when Jesus touches us, when He touches anything or anyone. . . there is LIFE.

We who have been dead in sin have been given new life by Jesus. In the Gospel the dead man sat up and spoke. We must rise and speak of the one who brought us to life to all who need to hear. Love demands it.

Jesus immediately gave the son to the mother. Why? So that the mother might be whole in her joy and that the son may be nourished and loved.

When we are baptized, we come to new life by the touch of Jesus, and we are made sons and daughters of God the Father and of our mother, the Church, so that we may live and be nurtured and that the Church might rejoice in her children.

The new evangelization has a new understanding of the who and the why.

The confused, the frightened, the sinner, the lost soul, the man, woman or child that does not know Christ, the one that is looking for the truth; these are whom Jesus wishes to touch so that they might speak of Him and He might return them to their mother.

The mother thrives and is more vibrant because her child has been given back to her. In the new evangelization, Love triumphs in all things.

New life for our friends, our families, our Church: that is the fruit of the new evangelization. Let us go and be fruitful.