

## Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Oct 18th 2014

Feast of Saint Luke, Evangelist

Happy Feast of St. Luke the Evangelist! Luke, like all the saints, was first and foremost a disciple of Christ. His discipleship led him to spread the Good News he had received through missionary work in the early church. The readings today are like a how-to manual for evangelization. It's a short manual, with only two steps, also stated in the golden rule.

Step 1: Open ourselves to a relationship with God.

“Your friends make known, O Lord, the glorious splendor of your Kingdom.”

The psalm response today carries the message of the other readings as well. “Your friends,” it says. Before anything else, we are called to be friends with God. There is nothing to “make known” without that relationship, and not much sense of “glorious splendor” will come through without it, either. Teaching about faith is not the same as teaching with faith. (It is possible to do both at once, though.)

Step 2: Build healthy relationships with others.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus asks his seventy-two missionary disciples first to trust (Lk 10:4), then to offer peace (Lk 10:5), to accept hospitality, to build a strong relationship with one household in the town (Lk 10:7), and to heal the sick in the town (Lk 10:9). Jesus wanted his disciples to reach out and spend time really getting to know a few people. Now, I tend to talk about whom and what I love (as any of my friends and co-workers from the last few years will tell you). My love for my family and friends becomes evident to new people I meet. If I were one of the seventy-two, talking over supper with my hosts, it wouldn't be long before my friendship with Jesus became evident. Only after relationships have been built, through trust, hospitality, and healing, do the missionaries in the Gospel say, “The Kingdom of God is at hand for you.” And then, Jesus would go to that town himself. Our relational God, three Persons in the Trinity, works through relationship with us and through our relationships with each other. Those relationships are where evangelization happens.

I spent two years as part of the Teach Bhríde lay community in Wexford, Ireland doing music ministry and catechesis in Clonard Parish. We did many things, good things, and I believe we helped spread the Gospel through them. I also believe that some of the most important moments of evangelization happened over tea after daily Mass, or when someone offered us a lift to the church (we usually walked), or at house parties hosted by friends, or when I was cleaning up the church and someone asked, “So, why are you all here?” We were simply present. We were 20-somethings who cared enough to be there, working for a Church still healing from scandals, in an increasingly secular culture, and it gave people pause. Our parish cared enough to welcome us. Every moment of evangelization

was one of everyday hospitality and small steps in relationship, and every time it went both ways.

Paul also offers a helpful tip in the first reading: not everything will be profound, and that is okay. I am always amused by Paul's laundry list of news and instructions for Timothy. Paul, who wrote such profound words about love and community, also wrote to just to update his friend, and to ask for his cloak, papyrus, and parchment. Isn't that comforting, that such an obviously dynamic figure could be so ordinary? Sometimes (in fact, most times) relationships are more ordinary than earth-shattering. Sometimes (in fact, most times) evangelization is, too.

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