

I send you out

Our reading from Acts today paints a very rosy picture of the newly forming Church back in the first century AD. Luke wrote that everything was shared by all equally and that they devoted themselves to meeting daily and to prayers and to the Breaking of the Bread. The Bible not being a history book – as we know it in the west in modern times – and human nature being what it is – I wonder how much of that was wishful thinking?

That said, St. Luke's report that each day the Lord added to their number is **encouraging** to us here in the **21st** century ...

... **but** if they devoted themselves to meetings and prayer and to the Eucharist, **how** did the Church grow?

There's a story told by Fr. Gerald Fuller about a Chinese farmer whose prize stallion jumped the fence and trotted away. He was last seen heading for the mountainous wild country. His neighbor came by and said to the peasant, "It's a shame you lost that horse. He was so valuable! You should have tied him up more securely so that he couldn't get out. Now you are even poorer than before!"

The farmer replied, "Well, who knows? How can we tell?"

A day or two later, the stallion came back, bringing with him a **dozen** wild horses! The neighbor exclaimed, “How wonderful! Your horse ran away, but came back. And he brought with him a dozen mares! Now you are no longer a peasant but a rich man! It’s a gift from God!”

To which the farmer responded, “Well, how can we know? Who can tell?”

Sisters and brothers, we can tell when something is a gift from God when we see our work multiply before our eyes. Just like that farmer’s prize stallion, we have to get out of the corral if we want to see our Christian numbers grow.

Perhaps we don’t go door to door as some Christian and quasi-Christian groups do, but we **do** evangelize our neighbors by our very actions!

At the Easter Vigil, there were tens of thousands of people who joined the Catholic Church in the United States. Sure, some of them went through RCIA because of a Catholic spouse or other relative, but many came to the Church because of what they **saw** in the Church ... and what they **saw** in **YOU!!!**

Like “Doubting Thomas” in John’s Gospel, **they** believed because they **saw**!

Maybe they saw you bow your head and cross yourself before that meal at Applebee’s or O’Charley’s ... or they saw you heading down the street to serve the poor and hungry at the St. Vincent de Paul soup kitchen over on North Cleveland Street.

Or maybe they saw you let an elderly person take that favored parking spot you had been waiting for ... or they spotted your “Choose Life” license plate or bumper sticker and their hearts resonated with our Catholic belief that **all** life is sacred from ... **when**, sisters and brothers? ... **that’s right!** ... from **conception** to **natural** death.

Perhaps they saw you turn away when your coworkers were starting up a gossip session ... or they saw you generously dip into your wallet for a card and flowers for a sick person you don’t even know.

Or possibly it was something that they **didn’t** see you do. Maybe they **didn’t** see you flip off that driver that cut in front of you and made you wait for the next light to make a left turn. Perhaps they **didn’t** see your car parked in front of that “gentlemen’s club” down on Summer and White Station ... or they **didn’t** see you stagger out of a bar at 2 a.m.

As they say in a popular radio spot on the Catholic Channel:

“If you’re baptized, **you’re** a missionary!”

That’s right ... **YOU!!!**

Whether it’s something you **did** or something you **didn’t** do, people see

YOU!

In this area, they **especially** watch Catholics to see how we act ,, and react. I once worked with a young man who ... seemingly out of the blue ... poked his head over the wall between our work spaces and asked me how he could be baptized! Why did he ask **me**? He said it was because he saw how I **acted** at work.

You see, being a Christian isn't a once a week thing. We have to live it ... everyday! We have to live what Fr. David Knight calls "Christ's Risen Life."

Having **received** the gift of life through our belief in Jesus, we are supposed to **share** it! It's **not** something for us to hoard and keep to ourselves.

But ... sometimes we slip up. From time to time we **fail** to live that "Risen Life." The good thing about being a Catholic Christian is, even when we fall short, Jesus made it possible through his **Divine Mercy** ... which we celebrate today ... to be forgiven. In that same Gospel about St. Thomas and the other disciples in the Upper Room, Jesus instituted two Sacraments. He **breathed** on the Apostles and gave them the gift of the Holy Spirit ... from which we get the Sacrament of Confirmation ... and He instituted the Sacrament of Reconciliation by giving the Apostles the power to forgive sins in His name.

And then ... He sent them out ... just as the Father had sent **HIM** out!!!

At the end of every Mass, the priest or deacon sends **YOU** out, too!!!

In fact, the word “Mass” comes from the Latin “Missa” which means “sending.”

At the end of this Mass, I will tell **YOU** to **GO ... to GO** in the peace of Christ!

This “sending” is **not** meant to end at the doors of the church. It’s a sending of you out into the **world** to be His **emissaries ... to be sent as He** was sent ... and as the **Apostles** were sent.

Sisters and brothers, that’s how it’s **meant** to be ... **that’s** how His Church **continues** to grow some 2,000 years later!

He sends you out ... to be examples of the Christian life ... so that even though the people haven’t seen Jesus, they **do** see **YOU!!!**

So when you exit the doors of the chapel tonight, **don’t** return to the ways of the world ... put **on** the ways of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, multiplying His followers by bringing **others** to His Church.

Remember ... **YOU** are a missionary!