

# Saints *Alive!*

PREMIER  
EDITION

The Quarterly Newsletter of Emmaus Journey

## Being Dogged About Evangelization

What part of “go!” do we not understand?

By Rich Cleveland

*There are approximately 62 million Catholics in this country. We cannot all leave our jobs and be full time in ministry, but we can all go. Consequently, it is crucial that we understand what “going” is all about.*

Jesus commissioned us to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28: 19,20). Pope Paul VI reminded us that presenting the Gospel message is a “duty incumbent . . . by the command of the Lord Jesus, so that people can believe and be saved.”<sup>1</sup> In addition, Pope John Paul II described this responsibility to “go” as the Christian mandate: “No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples.”<sup>2</sup>

Such statements can be a little overwhelming to those who take their responsibilities as Catholic Christians seriously. There are approximately 62 million Catholics in this country. We cannot all leave our jobs and be full time in ministry, but we can all go. Consequently, it is crucial that we understand what “going” is all about.

A young priest-to-be on the doorsteps of his ordination explained how he felt a similar sense of overwhelming anxiety and apprehension as he contemplated the task that was to be shortly thrust upon him. “When I was a month away from my ordination, I considered running, because all of a sudden I realized that the Catholic Church was going to assign to me a flock of my own. It terrified me, because I started imagining that I would fail at the job of shepherding my own flock.” He went on to say, “I can’t do that! I became so terrified that I made up my mind right then that I was going to pack up my bags and sneak out of there in the middle of the night, and they would never hear from me again. I remember packing all my bags and setting my alarm clock for 2:00 a.m., so I could

awake and sneak out of the seminary as I had planned. I lay down to sleep, and the Lord gave me a dream or a vision as I slept.

“I was lifted up very high and I saw a huge fenced-in area from far above. As I was brought lower, I saw sheep everywhere, too numerous to count. As I was brought even lower, I saw a dog, moving around with unending energy. Whatever the dog was doing, it did it wholeheartedly and never wearied. Then I was taken to the center of the fenced-in area, and I saw a man. Suddenly, I realized this man was Jesus, the Good Shepherd. He was in the center of his sheep pen. Then as I studied the dog again, I realized what the dog was doing. It was wholeheartedly and tirelessly chasing the sheep to the center of the sheep pen, where Jesus was. The dog was chasing sheep from the fringes of the sheep pen, even as far away as the fence and chasing them to the center.

“I suddenly woke up and realized, ‘That’s my job! I’m a sheep dog in the Lord’s sheep pen.’ My job is to chase Catholic sheep from the fringes to the center of the sheep pen where Jesus resides. If I can get these sheep close to Jesus, they will never be the same again. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will change them and care for them. My job was to chase them to the center so they could get close to their Shepherd. I realized then that I could do this! I found myself saying, ‘I am a sheep dog in the Lord’s sheep pen.’”

What terrific insight! This is a job that anyone can do. It does not require superhuman skills, years of theological study, or charismatic gifts, just a dogged faithfulness to show people Jesus. Pope John Paul II has encouraged us that “people today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories. The witness of a Christian

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## Emmaus Journey Mission Statement

Emmaus Journey is a Catholic evangelization and discipleship ministry that is conducted primarily in and through Catholic parishes. Emmaus Journey has embraced Goal 1 of *Go and Make Disciples: A Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*, produced by The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others."

### Emmaus Journey's Goals are:

- To help enable non-practicing Catholics, occasional Catholics, and nominal Catholics experience conversion to Christ, transformation in Christ, and mobilization for Christ as Catholic disciples.
- To encourage Catholics to embrace Jesus' call to advance the Gospel and his Kingdom by becoming laborers who live and disciple others from among the non-religious.
- To help mature and gifted Catholics discover a particular call to participate more fully in the task of evangelization.
- To indirectly serve Catholic parishes' evangelization efforts through small-group materials, evangelization and discipleship resources, seminars, ministry events, and messages that move them forward in their efforts to make Christ known, and to nurture mature Catholic disciples who can help others experience conversion, transformation, and mobilization for Christ.



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## From the Heart

By Rich Cleveland

### Representing Christ in the Everyday World

At 20 years of age, stationed in Weisbaden, Germany, after a lifetime of nominal Christian activity, I came to know and embrace the truth that Christ died for my salvation and wanted me to follow him. It wasn't primarily the three times a year visits to church—on Christmas, Easter, and Mother's Day—that captured my attention, but laypeople who took their responsibilities as Christians seriously. Simple questions and simple explanations by a layperson launched me on the trek of discovery, and it was a simple explanation of the Gospel and a simple call to respond by a layperson that called me to profess my belief. Laypeople nurtured my faith, taught me spiritual disciplines that would enable me to grow, and invited me to be involved in ministry.

This is the role of the laity, according to Sacred Scripture: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age."<sup>1</sup> And, "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation."<sup>2</sup>

And this is the role of the laity according to the Church: "Through their participation in the *prophetic mission* of Christ . . . the lay faithful are given the ability and responsibility to accept the Gospel in faith and to proclaim it in word and deed, without hesitating to courageously identify and denounce evil."<sup>3</sup>

*"The 'world' thus becomes the place and the means for the lay faithful to fulfill their Christian vocation because the world itself is destined to glorify God the Father in Christ*

***If and when the U.S. Catholic community is fully mobilized for Christ, there is no telling the impact that we can have on individuals and society. The "new evangelization" of which the Holy Father speaks can become a living reality in our time.***

. . . The lay faithful, in fact, 'are called by God so that they, led by the spirit of the Gospel, might contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties.'"<sup>4</sup>

We in Emmaus Journey take seriously this call to represent Christ in the everyday world. We can foresee the Holy Father's call for a "new evangelization" being fulfilled when fellow Catholic laypeople take their baptismal vows seriously and become so enamored with Christ and their relationship with him that they are motivated and desirous of reaching out to freely share their faith with others. If and when the U.S. Catholic community is fully mobilized for Christ, there is no telling the impact that we can have on individuals and society. The "new evangelization" of which the Holy Father speaks can become a living reality in our time.

It is the vision of Emmaus Journey that we can contribute to this goal by helping individuals mature in Christ by enabling them to grow in their understanding and commitment to the Sacred Scriptures and prayer, by encouraging them to accept their responsibilities as Catholic Christians in their parishes, and by fanning into flame their commitment to evangelization within their normal spheres of influence. Further, we strive to contribute to this goal by helping parish leaders inaugurate small groups and small Christian communities in their parishes, by assisting in the training of small-group facilitators, by providing practical small-group resources, and by developing and implementing various evangelization outreaches.

*Emmaus Journey Director Rich Cleveland, and his wife, Gail, are parishioners and active leaders at Holy Apostles Parish in Colorado Springs, Colorado.*

1 Matthew 28:19-20.

2 2 Corinthians 5:18.

3 *Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People*, 14.

4 *Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People*, 15.



# Saints: The Extraordinary Lives of Ordinary People

## Saint Paul: A Man of Passion

When it comes to evangelization and discipleship, St. Paul is a person we can learn from and emulate. It could rightly be said that St. Paul was a man of passion who pursued those things he deemed important, passionately. The first example of this is not one that we would commend to you, but it does illustrate the point. Because he believed that the Christ-ones

[early Christians] were a threat to Judaism, he pursued them relentlessly and ferociously. Thus, we see in the Acts of the Apostles, Saul, the future St. Paul, consenting to the death of the first Christian martyr, St. Stephen. Little did Saul realize that his conversion would be the fruit of St. Stephen's martyrdom, and that his passionate nature would be redeemed and redirected.

After St. Paul's conversion and his initial years of formation, he became a great example of what his namesake Pope Paul VI says when speaking of the Christian's mandate: "Those who have received the Good News and who have been gathered by it into the community of salvation can and must communicate and spread it."<sup>1</sup> St. Paul recognized this imperative and gave himself to it passionately. St. Paul did many things. He made tents to support himself, traveled extensively, enjoyed the fellowship of good companions, and suffered the indignity and limitations of aging. In the midst of all of life, however, he never forgot why he was where he was: to share the Gospel with those he naturally encountered in life and to help form them as disciples of Christ.

St. Paul was passionate about proclaiming Christ because he was passionate about knowing and experiencing Christ. The love of Christ, Christ's love for him and St. Paul's reciprocal love for Christ, constrained him to no longer live for himself but to live for Christ and the advancement of his Kingdom. He was passionate about his goal of knowing Christ. In his priorities, all else in life was a poor third.

What is it we can learn from and emulate about St. Paul? First, we can ask the Father to help us pursue our relationship with Christ and enable Jesus to become the love of our life in a way similar to that of St. Paul. Second, we can recognize and pursue our responsibility to be Christ's witness.

Like St. Stephen, whose death Saul witnessed and consented to, St. Paul became a martyr as a result of his passion to know Christ and to make him known. Few of us would desire to experience similar martyrdom, but now is the time for us to die to self so that others might live.

## The Chavezes: A Service-Oriented Duo

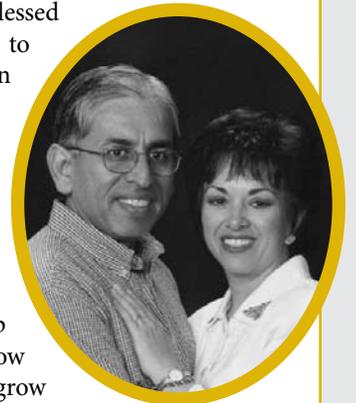
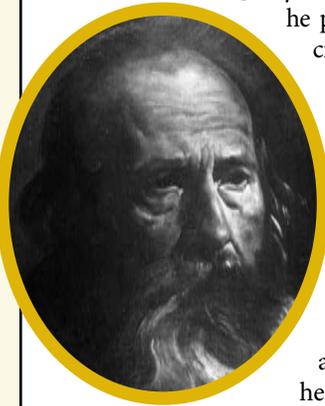
Abe and Liz Chavez, driven by a passion to know Christ and to make him known, have embraced the Christian mandate of being Christ's witnesses. Though lifelong Catholics, it was in their collegiate years that Christ became the central focus of their lives, and they began their lifelong love affair with the Father. After college, as Abe pursued his career as project engineer in the telecommunications industry and Liz pursued her calling as wife and mother, they continued to grow in their relationship with Christ and as his disciples.

Recognizing that evangelization is the foremost mission and duty of all the baptized, Abe and Liz became increasingly involved in this faith-inspired process of witnessing and sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with others. They became leaders in the Marriage Enrichment ministry at Holy Rosary Parish in Albuquerque, where they encountered many couples who desired to experience conversion and growth in Christ. Consequently, they opened their hearts and home to others, to talk, counsel, pray, and study the Sacred Scriptures. Though they did not have formal ministry training, God blessed their efforts and enabled them to have an expanding ministry in the lives of many as they took the gifts they had and used them.

In 1995, after much prayer and counsel, Abe resigned his position as project engineer to enter into full-time ministry. They are still actively involved in various ministry and leadership roles at Holy Rosary Parish but now spend more time helping people grow in their love and commitment to Christ.

Abe and Liz involve their entire family in the ministry of making Christ known. Their five daughters—two sets of twins—are engaging Christians, even as young ladies. They participate in the ministry by lovingly relating to and serving those who come through their home. Abe and Liz encourage fellow Catholics through small-group settings and on a person-to-person basis. In such settings, they can encourage, model, and challenge participants to embrace Christ and his call to Kingdom living. They share the Emmaus Journey objectives of encouraging people to experience conversion to Christ, transformation in Christ, and mobilization for Christ as Catholic disciples.

The Chavezes would be the first to tell you that they are simply ordinary Catholics trying to be faithful disciples. We would agree, and would suggest that ordinary Catholics trying to be faithful disciples can have an extraordinary impact.



<sup>1</sup> *On Evangelization In the Modern World* by Pope Paul VI, paragraph 13.

## Tools You Can Use

As we have seen in the Scriptures and through the insights of the Church, the world needs both a visual aid of the Good News and a verbal proclamation. Many of us struggle with how to do the latter in a meaningful way. For proclamation of the Good News to be done in a meaningful way, it must engage both the heart and the mind of the hearer.

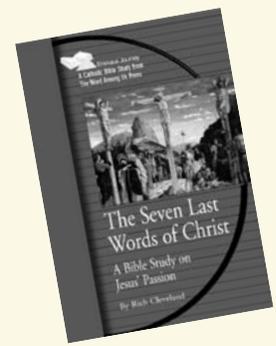
Every parent recognizes that telling is not teaching, nor is a nod of the head and an “un-huh” listening. So it is with the communication of Christ and the salvation that He accomplished on our behalf. The attention span of people seems to be getting shorter and shorter, and it is difficult to truly communicate the Gospel in sound bites. People, though, are often polite enough to humor us when we speak to them of the Gospel, even to the extent of feigning interest when in reality neither the head nor the heart is engaged in listening. Therefore, it is essential that we learn to communicate in ways so that the message is truly heard, considered, and received.

Experts experienced in adult learning patterns tell us that adults primarily learn through self-discovery. Consequently, beginning in the early seventies, we have seen an upsurge in the use of small-group learning methodology with adults. Our evangelical brothers have been especially adept at this, and small groups have been the building-block foundation of many churches as well as a meaningful formation tool. Many former Catholics have been attracted to these churches when their hunger for learning about the Scriptures was matched by an invitation to participate in a small group. As the U.S. Catholic Bishops have pointed out, “People are ready to gather in groups to read the Scriptures, study the teachings of the Church, and talk about the importance of Christ in their lives. They seek out these opportunities wherever they can find them, whether in their own parishes, in ecclesial movements or associations, in small communities of faith, or with people of other Christian traditions.”<sup>1</sup>

As Catholics we need to recognize the potential of using small-group discussions both as an evangelization method and as a formation tool. When we invite people to discuss the Gospel, rather than simply telling them the Gospel, we are better able to engage their hearts and minds. Effective small-group materials pose questions on short passages of Scripture and cause people to wrestle with the answers. This requirement to think on Scripture and answer questions about a passage engages the mind and causes people to actually think about the truth being discussed. When this happens, the Holy Spirit always does his part and begins the process of illumination, speaking to the heart. Emmaus Journey small-group materials are effective tools you can use, either in a group or in a one-on-one evangelization and discipleship effort.

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<sup>1</sup> *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the U.S.*, 26.



### **The Seven Last Words of Christ**—A New Bible Study on Jesus' Passion

Ideal for small groups or for personal devotion, this study will enable you to contemplate Jesus' Passion in a new way. Chapters include:

- ▶ Reflection on one of Jesus' statements from the cross.
- ▶ Brief Scripture study on the theme of Jesus' statement.
- ▶ Personal experience, prayer, and a practical exercise.
- ▶ Amplification of an aspect of the Good News.

*Ordering information and free Facilitator's Guides are available online at [www.emmausjourney.org](http://www.emmausjourney.org).*

## **Dogged** *continued from front page*

life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission . . . ”<sup>3</sup> We first and foremost show people Jesus by living in such a way that they are drawn to him as he manifests his character, his values, and his love through our lives. As Pope Paul VI says, “Through this wordless witness these Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live.”<sup>4</sup> We can do that!

If our lives “stir up irresistible questions” in people's lives, we then must also be faithful to provide some answers. This is the part of Jesus' commission that involves telling people about the Good News, and verbally propagating

an understanding of who he is, what he did, and why he came to dwell among us. “The Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life. There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom, and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed.”<sup>5</sup> Often it is in the telling that we feel inadequate and apprehensive. But in reality evangelization is simply a friend telling a friend about a friend. We need not argue, nor persuade, nor manipulate. Sometimes people do react and resist when we attempt to do that.

Instead, we need only to have a genuine experience with Jesus and tell others of that experience. When people see Jesus demonstrated through our lives and hear a clear explanation of his love and salvation, they will invariably be attracted to him, for he is altogether lovely. We can do that! We should do that!

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<sup>1</sup> *On Evangelization in the Modern World* by Pope Paul VI, paragraph 5.  
<sup>2</sup> *Mission of the Redeemer* by Pope John Paul II, paragraph 3.  
<sup>3</sup> *Mission of the Redeemer* by Pope John Paul II, paragraph 42.  
<sup>4</sup> *On Evangelization in the Modern World* by Pope Paul VI, paragraph 21.  
<sup>5</sup> *On Evangelization in the Modern World* by Pope Paul VI, paragraph 21.