

Saints *Alive!*

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The Quarterly Newsletter of Emmaus Journey

It *Is* Necessary—Use Words!

Sharing the Good News involves more than living a good life

By Rich Cleveland

“The Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life.”

—Pope Paul VI

A recent news article on the U.S. Air Force Academy reported that “Americans United for Separation of Church and State claims Christian staff and students are being too aggressive with their faith.”¹ This and similar efforts endeavor to squash any propagation of the faith, whether at the Academy or any place else. So some tentatively ask, “In the present atmosphere of anti-Christian bias and the propagation of an ‘I’m okay, you’re okay,’ philosophy, is it really necessary to verbally proclaim the Gospel? After all, didn’t St. Francis say, ‘Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary use words?’”

Questions like these, and our inexplicable aversion to engaging non-Christians in conversation about God and their eternal destiny, frequently immobilize us from advancing the Gospel of Jesus and his kingdom. The solution comes from knowing with certainty that this is in fact our calling. Pope Paul VI felt so strongly that we needed to understand our responsibility to proclaim the Gospel that he devoted an entire encyclical to clarifying this mandate.

After having affirmed the value and contribution of our “wordless witness,”² he explains, “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.*”³ Is it necessary? Absolutely! As St. Paul’s questions rhetorically emphasize in Romans 10:14, “But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear *without a preacher?*”

Pope John Paul II provides further insight when answering the question, “Why mission?”

His first response is, “We reply with the Church’s faith and experience that true liberation consists in opening oneself to the love of Christ. In him, and only in him, are we set free from all alienation and doubt, from slavery to the power of sin and death.”⁴ To be complacent about sharing our faith is to be complacent about the enslavement of others to sin and death. It’s unchristian!

Pope John Paul goes on to explain, “Why mission? Because to us, as to St. Paul, ‘this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ’ (Eph. 3:8). Newness of life in him is the ‘Good News’ for men and women of every age: all are called to it and destined for it. Indeed, all people are searching for it, albeit at times in a confused way, and have a right to know the value of this gift and to approach it freely.”⁵ Every person has a *right* to know. To withhold the Good News from those around us is akin to having discovered a simple cure for cancer and failing to tell those around us who are infected by this disease that they can be cured. The only difference is that to withhold the Good News from people is to affect their eternity.

Can this vision of Catholic laity sharing the Gospel become a visible reality? It can. All it takes is for us to recognize our responsibility, to seek out a little training on ways to converse the Gospel, to initiate being friends to others, and to engage those around us in conversations about the Good News.

How does one converse the Gospel? The following five suggestions will enhance our ability to talk about the Gospel in normal conversation with our friends and acquaintances.

- Recognize that it is up to us to initiate conversation about Jesus and the Gospel. Proverbs says, “He who has friends must show himself friendly.” A smile and a

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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 nonreligious.
- 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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Multiple copies of *Saints Alive!* are available upon request.

From the Heart By Rich Cleveland

Saying It Simply

Sharing our faith with another need not be a difficult and mysterious thing. As I have mentioned before, witnessing is simply a friend telling a friend about a friend.

Some people who are outgoing and confident communicating spiritual truth to others can share their faith quite easily. Others of us need a little more help.

In the accompanying article we learn that St. Catherine referred to Christ as a bridge between earth and heaven, between lost-ness and eternal life. This reminds me that many of us over the years have been exposed to a helpful evangelizing tract called "The Bridge."

There exist several Catholic and Protestant variations of this pamphlet for sharing the Gospel. Brief illustrations like "The Bridge" can easily be sketched out on any available piece of paper, even a napkin. The illustration shows two cliffs separated by a vast and bottomless gulf. This becomes the backdrop for communicating the deep theological truths of the Gospel, namely:

- The Promise—of a glorious life with a loving and caring heavenly Father.
- The Problem—of our sinful nature and sinful behavior which has closed the door to heaven and participation in this glorious promise of life with God.
- The Provision—of Christ, given by the Father as a bridge across this impassable gulf, providing a way to the Father and restoring the possibility of life eternal.

At this point, a cross, symbolizing Jesus' work of redemption, can be sketched across the chasm.

Most people don't need to be convinced of their sin nor of their broken and non-existent relationship with the Father. What they do need to hear and understand is what this glorious life consist of which the Father planned for them and how they can obtain it. That's the *Good News*.

Ideally, with each of the above points we should also turn to passages of Scripture and maintain a dialog with the person as we sketch out and explain each part of the Gospel using this analogy. Sketching out the illustration as we go, using the Scripture, and carrying

Witnessing should not be a monologue but rather it should be a two-way discussion about Jesus.

on a dialog enables us to maintain the other's attention and interest, and discover what he really understands and believes. Unless we are standing behind a pulpit, witnessing should not be a monologue but rather it should be a two-way discussion about Jesus, the passion he endured for them, and the powerful effects of his resurrection and ascension.

This simple approach works well when we have limited time or as an introduction to the Gospel. But in order for people to really have a good foundational knowledge on which to base their faith they need to be invited to take a deeper and longer look at who Jesus is and what he has done for us. Consequently, these casual explanations of the Gospel should be followed by an invitation to learn more. (The "Tools You Can Use" section on page four introduces one way you can do this.)

We must also keep in mind that regardless of how awesome and effective some tool or technique may be, "Conversion is the change of our lives that comes about through the power of the Holy Spirit."¹ We must be in constant reliance on him as we share our faith, knowing that he has promised to use his people, his Scripture, and his power to draw people to Jesus.

We can with confidence share our faith, knowing that he is more concerned than we are that people hear and respond.



¹ From *Go and Make Disciples*, Published by the US Council of Catholic Bishops

Saints: The Extraordinary Lives of Ordinary People

Saint Catherine of Siena: Helping the Lost

At the early age of seven, St. Catherine of Siena vowed her heart to God. In her determination to serve Christ,

Catherine at age 15, “cut off her hair in defiance of efforts to make her marry,”¹ and a few years later at 18, she joined a laywoman’s order of Dominicans who served Christ from their homes. At 21, she left the solitude of her room to embark on a remarkable career of service to others: the poor, royalty, the Papacy, and to many and any who desired to follow Christ. Due to her brilliant and deep understanding of spiritual truth, St. Catherine is one of only two women who have been declared a Doctor of the Roman Catholic Church.

God gave St. Catherine an unusually intense desire for the salvation of individuals, and the Holy Spirit used her to bring many to faith in Christ. Her writings provide exceptional insight into the spiritual battle for souls, and for attaining a life of virtue which she believed was essential to reaching those without Christ.

Way back in the 1300s, the Holy Spirit gave St. Catherine the imagery of a bridge to illustrate aspects of salvation in Christ, the bridge of life. “And I will make of my Son a bridge by which you can reach your goal . . . What is this truth? That I had created them in my image and likeness so that they might have eternal life, sharing in my being and enjoying my supreme eternal tenderness and goodness. But because of their sin they never reached this goal and never fulfilled my truth, for sin closed heaven and the door of mercy. . . . But I wanted to undo these great troubles of yours. So I gave you a bridge, my Son. . . .”²

St. Catherine expounds in the next 98 pages of *The Dialogue* what God taught her about salvation and our life in Christ. God taught Catherine, and she teaches us, that our love for Christ and his virtue in us should create a deep desire within us to bring Christ, the bridge of life, to our neighbors. Hundreds of people in her day, and in the days since thousands more, have profited much by allowing the teachings of St. Catherine to grip their souls. If we choose to listen to the Father as did Saint Catherine, we too will grow in virtue, and with this growth in virtue will come a thirst to experience salvation more deeply, and a holy thirst for the salvation of our neighbors.



Sherry Weddell: Lay People Power

“Unleashing the Greatest Power in the Universe” not only introduces an article by Sherry Weddell but also provides a window into her soul and her vision for ministry.

Sherry is co-founder and co-director of The St. Catherine of Siena Institute, a program of the Western Dominican Province, founded in 1997. Sherry has invested years of graduate level study of both her evangelical roots and the Catholic faith she later embraced. She has been gripped by the ramifications of what it means to live as a Catholic layperson in an increasingly secular world.

Sherry believes, “We are called by our Baptism and Confirmation not only to *receive* Christ in the sacraments but also to *bring* Christ to the world.”¹ This vision goes hand and glove with the teaching of the Church regarding the role of laity: “On all Christians therefore is laid the preeminent responsibility of working to make the divine message of salvation known and accepted by all men throughout the world.”²

Sherry understands that a mobilized laity demands spiritually well-formed disciples. “Lay Catholics need more than the basic catechetical foundation geared to children in elementary school or their early teens. They need, in addition, an integrating formation *designed for adults* that prepares them to live as apostles, gifted men and women of faith who are called by God to shape the world they live in through their love and work. It is imperative [that] lay Catholics know that they are called and supernaturally empowered to participate in Christ’s redemption of all that is human through their engagement in the world.”³

Consequently, Sherry travels the world to educate Catholic leaders and laypeople regarding the potential for evangelization that the Church has in the laity. More than 20,000 people have been trained through the seminar Sherry developed.

There is no doubt that Sherry is on to something. Catholic laity in this country constitutes approximately one out of every four people. Imagine what would happen if each was more than simply sacramentalized, but instead became formed in their gifts and calling. Imagine the evangelizing power that would be *unleashed!*

To learn more, go to <http://www.siena.org/>.



1 *The Dialogue*, Introduction page 3, by Catherine of Siena, translation by Suzanne Noffke, O.P., published by Paulist Press

2 *Ibid*; paragraph 21

1 “Unleashing the Greatest Power in the Universe,” by Sherry Weddell

2 *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, by Pope Paul VI, (3)

3 “Unleashing the Greatest Power in the Universe,” by Sherry Weddell

Tools You Can Use

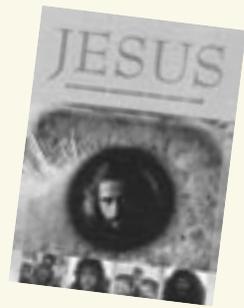
Jesus: Eyewitness Accounts from Saint Luke

There are few things more powerful than a well-articulated personal eyewitness account. It cannot be refuted and rings with authenticity. That is why the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life are so powerful and essential to the process of evangelization. In times past, because most people in this country had a basic understand of who Jesus is and what the Church teaches, Christians could rely more heavily on "plan of salvation" presentations when sharing their faith. Today, it is not unusual to encounter people who have never darkened the door of a church, nor know the first thing about Jesus and Christianity. Even many individuals who were baptized as infants have often not frequented church, and so know little of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in whose name they were baptized. So how does one begin sharing their faith in this day and age? Increasingly, the most effective place to start, and the most non-threatening, is to simply begin by inviting them to read and discuss together one of the Gospels. People often are eager to discover what the Bible says about Jesus when given an opportunity to talk about it in a casual environment of discovery. Christians who engage in this kind of evangelization are freed-up from having to become the "convincer" and instead simply can facilitate the discussion. Because Scripture is alive and powerful, and because the Holy Spirit is committed to illuminating the hearts and minds of those who in good conscience read and consider the Scripture, evangelism takes place much like the birth of a child. Over time their faith grows and they are born into real life.

Jesus: Eyewitness Accounts from Saint Luke combines Luke's Gospel account of Jesus' life with real life stories of Catholics who have encountered Jesus. Interspersed throughout the 24 chapters of Luke are reading guides and discovery questions. It is a powerful presentation of the Gospel because it encompasses these additional personal eyewitness accounts. In addition, Paul Cowan, who was instrumental in producing this booklet, has put together a practical facilitator's guide for using this booklet to converse the faith.

Whether your desire is simply to help a friend, family member, or acquaintance, or to invite several neighbors or acquaintances into a group encounter with the Gospel account, *Jesus: Eyewitness Accounts from Saint Luke* is a tool you should consider using "to make the divine message of salvation known and accepted."¹

¹ *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, by Pope Paul VI, (3)



Jesus: Eyewitness Accounts from Saint Luke

- Available Sept. 1, 2005
- Price: \$5.95 each
- Facilitator's Guide \$4.00 each, or download for free online

***Jesus: Eyewitness Accounts from Saint Luke* contains:**

- The Gospel according to Saint Luke
- Twelve "Going Deeper" sections explaining the Christian life.
- Nine "Life Stories" of Catholic encounters with Christ
- Eight "Excerpts" from Church leaders including Pope Benedict XVI
- Numerous clarifications of theological terms encountered

It Is Necessary *continued from front page*

pleasant hello is usually all it takes to get a conversation going, and a well timed, well thought out, non-threatening question like, "Where do you see God in all this?" can turn the discussion to spiritual issues.

- Invite people to share where they are in their spiritual journey without feeling the need to correct their theology or fix their misconceptions. Their perception of where they are and what they believe is accurate though perhaps based on misinformation or misconceptions. Listen to discover where they are.
- Share where you are in your journey in a non-threatening, pleasant manner. Keep it brief and to the point; later you can elaborate where needed. It is always helpful to think ahead on how you can explain your journey to adult faith and commitment in a simple story fashion. Be sure to include a clear statement of the Good News.
- Avoid religious sounding and theological terms. Jesus was a master at putting spiritual truth into everyday

language and illustrations. When we are talking to the non-religious we need to assume that the religious terms with which we are familiar are meaningless to them and instead tell our story in everyday language.

- After briefly sharing your journey to faith you can invite further dialogue by asking a simple question, like, "Have you heard of similar experiences?"

As we learn to converse our faith we will begin fulfilling Pope John Paul II's great vision for the evangelization of the world. Conversing the Gospel is proclaiming our faith—with words. This is something we can do. This is something we should do.

¹ *Family News in Focus* article "Complaint Filed Against Air Force Academy Christians," by Stuart Shepard

² *Evangelization in the Modern World*, by Pope Paul VI, (21)

³ *Evangelization in the Modern World*, by Pope Paul VI, (22)

⁴ *Mission of the Redeemer*, by Pope John Paul II (11)

⁵ *Mission of the Redeemer*, by Pope John Paul II (11)