



Pastor's Column

St. Peter Catholic Church

November 11, 2018, Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Parochial Year for Evangelization: November Tip of the Month

We now enter into the final month of our Parochial Year for Evangelization. Our evangelization tip of the month for October was: do not condemn. We love the sinner (and we hate the sin). We do not condemn a *person*, though by condemning certain *actions* and *behaviors* that are sinful, we can help guide people toward repentance, conversion, and discipleship.

Our tip of the month for November (our final tip of the month for this Parochial Year for Evangelization) is: know when to stop. It seems often to be the case that as soon as we perceive even the slightest sign of interest from someone who needs further evangelization, many of us want to rush right in and rattle off the whole Gospel message without taking into account the person's response, objections, questions – or even their readiness. We need to be careful to give the person only as much of the Good News as he or she is ready to hear at a particular time, and all the while, we continue to pray for other opportunities to share the Good News with them. Do not be afraid that another opportunity for sharing will not present itself, but rather acknowledge that some of us sow, others of us water, and God does the reaping in His own time. Your poise and patience may very well be the thing God uses to bring this person to want more.

There is an adage that tells us that "less is more." The idea is that in spite of our common sense, in spite of logic and reasonable expectation, it is in fact *not* always the case that if we can just keep putting more and more effort into something, we will keep obtaining more and more results.

But that is not always the case. Sometimes *less is more*. Athletes know this; they can only work so hard and work their bodies and their muscles only so hard before dangerous damage ends up being done to the body and the muscles. To keep doing more and more, for them, would be counter-productive. Musicians also know this; more volume singing or playing an instrument often is not the way to perform music as beautifully as it ought to be performed; sometimes, music is the most beautiful when it is at its softest and gentlest sound.

And evangelists know this as well, that less is more. We have got to trust in God that all we can do sometimes is simply plant that seed of faith and then stand back and let God take care of it from there. Farmers plant the seeds and then trust that the soil and the rain will make the seeds in the ground grow; almost nothing beyond simply planting the seed can be done by the farmer so as to *make* the seed grow – the farmer can only *let* it grow.

And so, we as evangelists plant the seeds and then let God take it from there; let God be God.

Our saint of the month for November is Saint Leo the Great, 5th-Century pope and one of the original Doctors of the Church. His feast is November 10, and he is perhaps most famous for having to deal with Attila the Hun, who was marching south through the Italian peninsula, sacking and conquering every city on the way. His ultimate prize was to be Rome, for Rome was the capital city, the seat of that ancient, thousand-year-old empire that could *never* be conquered – the "Eternal City." Rome was his prize, and everyone was afraid.

And so, he went to Rome. And Saint Leo went out to meet him to try to convince him to leave Rome in peace. Who knows what exactly Saint Leo said that may or may not have been very convincing for one of the most terrifying tyrants and warlords in world history...but tradition holds that just as Saint Leo had said what he could so that he knew that more words would actually do no good and maybe even do harm ("less is more"), in that moment, Saint Peter and Saint Paul appeared to Attila, and from the clouds of heaven, they swooped toward him, brandishing swords and striking terror into the very heart of Attila. They effectively were taking over for Saint Leo, as again Saint Leo had nothing more to say that could have persuaded Attila to leave them be.

Regardless of whether this is fact or legend, it *is* absolutely true that even though Attila had made it to Rome, he left Rome unscathed, having taken only a few treasures as spoils – which were probably just gifts given to him by Saint Leo as part of his tactic to persuade him to leave. Saint Leo knew, it seems, that “less is more.” He knew when to stop trying and just let the Lord take it from there. Truly amazing things will happen for us, as well, if we can do this, too.

- Fr. Lewis