



Pastor's Column

St. Peter Catholic Church

March 4, 2018 ~ Third Sunday of Lent

Parochial Year for Evangelization: March Tip of the Month

Our Parochial Year for Evangelization continues. Last month, February's tip of the month for evangelization was: witnessing to life and including God in our vocabulary. We need not ever be afraid to mention the Lord in conversation or to speak of God and actually use the words "God," "Lord," and "Jesus in the vocabulary of our daily vernacular.

March's tip of the month is: become a person of welcome and develop relationships of care and trust. The monthly insert for the Parochial Year for Evangelization (enclosed in the bulletin for this Sunday) features points of discussion and reflection questions on "going forth" and the overall theme of accompaniment (that is, accompanying others on their journey of faith, wherever they are and happen to be at this point in their journey). Being people of welcome, developing relationships of care and trust – that is all part of the art of accompaniment.

We strive to practice becoming increasingly welcoming toward others, thereby making every effort to avoid critical or judgmental thoughts, attitudes, and words, for such unnecessary judging is a sure deterrent for folks who might be considering Christ and His Church. We strive, therefore, to encourage an attitude of welcome and acceptance in our own family in faith here at St. Peter.

Now, avoiding critical and judgmental thoughts, attitudes, and words does not mean that we stand idly by and remain silent as if we are complicit to wayward and sinful actions and behaviors; it means, rather, that we strive for patient compassion, realizing all the while that the old cliché "honey attracts, not vinegar" happens to be true. After all, Jesus had compassion first on the woman caught in adultery and *then* exhorted her to "go, [and] from now on do not sin anymore."

In all of this, we ask the Lord to instill within our hearts His own sentiments and care for the people in our lives with whom He would like us to share about His salvation and His plan for them; and we begin to develop or deepen a relationship of friendship and trust with the person or persons whom God and life's circumstances place on our hearts and in our lives. As trust and care for other people develops, we then strive to be ready to share with them what the Lord and His Church have come to mean in our own lives and to Christians throughout the world all through the centuries.

Our saint of the month, St. Katharine Drexel (whose Memorial is March 3), did exactly this in her own efforts to evangelize. She was an American apostle to the African and Native American peoples throughout our great nation in the 19th and early 20th Centuries. Learning their culture and languages, and all the while exuding such a joyful air of patient compassion, she won the hearts of many on her way toward winning their souls for Christ. She lived to the ripe old age of ninety-six years and died in 1955, by that time having founded a system of African American Catholic schools in thirteen states (including Xavier University in New Orleans), along with forty mission centers and twenty-three rural schools for Native Americans.

And it all began with her ability to become a person of welcome and develop relationships of care and trust. She is one of our great American saints who shows us that we, too, can be such folks of warm welcome and that we, too, can form relationships of care and trust, winning hearts all along the way in our holy striving to win souls for Jesus Christ.

~Fr. Lewis