

## **Holy Spirit and Evangelization**

(Article from the 28<sup>th</sup> issue of God Grace magazine)

### **The Drive behind Evangelization.**

I think our readers all know that it is the duty for a baptized Christian to spread the Gospel.

### **Knowledge and Duty.**

Jesus teaches us, “Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.” (Mk 16:15) Pope Benedict VI said that every human being and the unborn have the right to listen to the Gospel. Pope John Paul II designated the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the decade for the renewal of evangelization, namely, Evangelization 2000. Therefore, Evangelization is the center of the Church’s mission.

It is easy to talk about Evangelization, but knowledge and duty can’t make us effective evangelists, otherwise those who have heard the teaching of the Church have already voluntarily engaged themselves in Evangelization. Besides the sense of duty, are there any other initiatives behind Evangelization?

### **Pressure and Fear.**

I have a friend who is a catechist and serves the parish with enthusiasm. He told me that he grew up in a very strict family that is impoverished of love. The image of his father has been confused with the image of God in his mind: for him God is a stern judge and he was trying hard to meet the demands of God in order not to go to hell. “Woe to me if I do not preach Gospel!” (1Cor 9:16) For him, the Chinese poem for the Spring Festival, “Heaven’s grace is boundless and God’s love is eternal” has become “Heaven’s condemnation is boundless and God’s punishment is persistent.”

Evangelization under the pressure or fear can never last long neither could it yield good results, for we are not evangelizing a “Good News.”

The knowledge of evangelization does not equal to the drive behind Evangelization which needs action, not merely theory. Let’s discuss the drive behind Evangelization. The last teaching from the Lord before his Ascension is, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

### **What are the tongues of fire?**

Before the descending of the Holy Spirit the Apostles were filled with fear. When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, the Holy Spirit descended upon them in the form of the tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit itself has no form, however for the purpose of signifying the mission of the receiver it takes upon a form: at the Lord’s baptism it appeared in the form of a dove to signify that Jesus is the Messiah of peace. At the Pentecost, the Holy Spirit filled the entire house with the tongues of fire and filled the disciples with power and enthusiasm with which the disciples went out to proclaim the Gospel and be the witnesses of the Lord.

## **The Holy Spirit is the Drive.**

Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Apostles bravely walked onto the squares in Jerusalem to proclaim the living Lord Jesus, the first evangelization in human history. Peter concluded, "He (Jesus) received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father and poured it forth, as you both see and hear." (Acts 2:33)

The Holy Spirit is sent by God the Father and the Son to the world, working with His people and preparing them for the coming of the Kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit is the drive behind Evangelization!

While the early Church didn't have any plans or training for evangelical movement, the Church grew rapidly by herself, because every member of the Church was actively being the witness of Lord, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

If the twelve Apostles could change the world, why can't we the 10 billion faithful continue and renew the movement of evangelization? Now we know the drive behind Evangelization is the Holy Spirit and we should think about how much freedom and space we've given it to perform at its best?

*\* If you have any reflection on this article or your faith sharing, please write it down and put it into the collection box located at the back of the church.*

### **Reflection on last article:**

Sometimes to spread the Good News in public place, to talk about Jesus with strangers, to be the light and salt in an environment of different religions may not be so difficult as expected, as long as we keep a calm, humble attitude, a loving spirit and a sincere respect towards the people we encounter.

During the Advent I went to a big bookstore and bought a gift card with "Merry Christmas" on it. I then asked for a matching cover. "I am very sorry," the shop assistant apologized, "but this is the closest one we've got." She then handed me a cover with "Happy Holiday" on it. I said sincerely, "Miss, you see this is a gift for a Christian friend, and by Christian tradition people use "Merry Christmas" to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ. It is just as natural and significant as Jewish people use "Happy Hanukkah" to commemorate the miracle of light. But if we collapse these traditions into one cover of "Happy Holidays", the distinction and richness of each would suffer, and so would your business." The shop assistant nodded in agreement and said she would convey my opinion to the store management. I further suggested, "with a healthy sensitivity on religious traditions and some modification of the words on the cover, you can certainly make a difference in your store and your career." "Thank you very much," she replied happily.

In evangelization we don't need to fight with people, but just calmly and respectably speak the truth and leave the rest to God.