

Holy Spirit and Evangelization (IV)

(Article from the 28th issue of God Grace magazine)

The Culture of “do more talk less”.

“Good deeds are also evangelization!”

“The act of love and witness of faith through life experience are stronger than words!”

These are the statements often heard in the Catholic communities. Of course if you don't practice what you preach, who would believe you? Pope John Paul II in the encyclical of The Mission of Christ the Redeemer emphasizes that the primacy of the irreplaceable witness of faith through the Christian life. However this does not mean that we just need to be a good person without evangelizing about Jesus and the salvation He has brought to us. “But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘how beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news!’” (Rom 10:14-15)

Emphasizing the virtue of good deeds and overlooking the preaching of the good news, many Catholic faithful habitually view evangelization as the characteristics of the Protestants and therefore don't share the same enthusiasm. We are taught that those who are not baptized could also have the opportunity to attain the eternal life, and Catholic ministry tends to be more pastoral than evangelical. These are the elements that have fostered a culture of “do more and talk less”.

Jesus not only preached love, but also the Good News. For 2,000 years the Church has been emphasizing evangelization, and in recent years she has put evangelization on the front burner, carrying out evangelization in a systematic and solid manner. Pope John Paul II promulgated the “New Evangelization” which introduces new methods of evangelization in this new era. It also promotes the evangelization to the non-believers and the lukewarm parishioners. This has received the responses from the local churches: the Hong Kong Diocese has made her major goal in the next 5 years to “evangelize the good news and prepare for the kingdom of God”.

Although the mainstream viewpoint of evangelization has been improving, it still takes the proper training and education to change the culture of “do more and talk less” into “do more and talk more” attitude.

The Training of Evangelization – How to evangelize?

In the past when I was discussing faith with people I only knew to invite people to attend the class that teaches the Catholic faith. When I was teaching the faith in the class, I felt comforted

that I was doing some work for evangelization. Later under the guidance of the Holy Spirit I learned that we need to add witness of faith into the teaching, using the real life stories and experiences to give the witness of a living and loving God. Not until I attended the 4-day Catholic Evangelization Training Program when I realized that to be better equipped for the evangelization we need more than spreading the doctrines, but promoting people's encounters of our Savior Jesus and helping them establish a deeper communion with Him.

In recent 10 years many evangelization schools have emerged: The International Catholic Program of Evangelization offers the 4.5-month course to teach the students to develop the relationship with God, learn the Church teaching and practical methods of evangelization. The students will go to the schools, parishes and prisons to spread the Gospel through the means of silent play, dance and witness of faith. Now there are students from over 30 countries who have graduated from this school.

The Steps of evangelization for individuals.

Major four steps:

1. The preparation before evangelization: make friends with the individual, share faith with him, give personal witness to touch his heart and ask questions to arouse his interest.
2. Evangelization: explain the basic message of Gospel – God is merciful and loving, and human beings are His children; but we have the original sin and can't redeem ourselves; it is only through being with Jesus to die to sin and resurrect to eternal life that we can receive this gift of eternity from God.
3. Invitation and acceptance: Jesus invites us to accept the gift of eternal life and we need to embrace Him as God the Savior before we could receive the grace. At this moment the evangelist should pray with the individual, asking for the help of the Holy Spirit to foster and strengthen the belief.
4. Following up: bring the believer into the Church and help him become a member of the body of Christ.

I would sum up the above 4 steps into the following 6 phrases:

Making a friend; spreading Good news; sharing the faith; witnessing Jesus Christ; sowing the seed and losing no face.

**** 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.***