

Here we go again

If you pay attention to the scriptural readings from Eastertime to Pentecost and now through Ordinary time, one thing becomes clear – disciples of Jesus must do something to advance the mission of Christ.

These recent stories from the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel provide clues for evangelization. Some years ago, Father Raymond L. Harris Jr., during one of our “Operation Faith Lift Sessions,” walked us through several stories within Acts to uncover some strategies to activate and re-energize parish evangelization efforts. Father Harris reminded us that the apostles were filled with the life of the Holy Spirit; after all, the inaugural chapter of “Acts” gives us first-hand evidence of what can happen to and with a band of believers when touched by the Holy Spirit.

Once touched, the apostles were enlivened by the word of God and dedicated to advance the mission of Jesus Christ. The apostles were rooted in prayer and became liberated from the power of sin. They were converted, formed by God’s word. They were serious about obeying Christ in the mission of transforming the world and they kept moving to reach God’s people. Once touched they were compelled to do something and to keep on doing something.

The early disciples of Christ went here, there and everywhere, activating bold preaching, providing opportunities for healing, testifying everywhere, building relationships, teaching the word of God and always praying. These are some powerful clues for evangelizing even in today’s world. That is why so many parishes within the city continue street evangelization efforts and outreach as often and as strongly as they do. These parishes are moving in their communities, testifying, healing, teaching, praying, building relationships and serving as a living witness of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church in places where those who are poor cannot escape. These small, yet significant parishes serve as “outlets of evangelization,” sharing the word of God where God’s people seek hope and Jesus.

We too are serious about obeying Christ in the mission of transforming the world and to reach God’s people. We too are compelled by the Holy Spirit to do something and to keep on doing efforts of outreach and maintaining strong parishes as outlets

of evangelization. God's people yearn for hope and healing, and strength and power to overcome the many challenges of these times.

Dr. Robert Hill, a noted sociologist and professor, states that "religious orientation is a strength of African American families and that families affiliated with a Church tend to have higher education and income and produce children who encounter successes in the work arena and educational settings." That sounds like another very good reason for evangelizing and another way to transform the world.

On July 2, black Catholics will show once again their commitment of evangelizing by witnessing about Jesus Christ at the annual African American Heritage Festival at M&T Bank Stadium. This year's celebration will be joined with the annual Stone Soul Picnic. Many people anticipate attending, of which we can hopefully witness to and about the mighty things God has done. It is another opportunity for us to build relationships and invite others to come to know Jesus through the Catholic Church.

In the meantime, let's pray together for God's wisdom as we undergo planning, challenges and changes within the Catholic Church of Baltimore. Let's pray together for God's guidance and abundance during this outreach effort. Let's be mindful in all of this, "to do all things through Christ who strengthens us and that the Spirit of which God has given us is no cowardly spirit, but rather one that makes us strong, loving and wise" (2 Tm 1:7). Come join us at our booth July 2, from noon until 9 p.m., at M&T Bank Stadium as we reach out with a Jesus' touch. For more information, call 410-625-8472.

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