

More matters that matter; ready for Operation Faith Lift?

By Therese Wilson Favors

In the African American Catholic community the ministry of evangelization takes a front-row seat. It is a matter that matters. Each one of us knows of the power of having a personal relationship with Jesus and in our faith communities we strive hard, real hard, to invite people to take that walk with Jesus through the Catholic tradition.

Here's some down-home inspiration, which confirms that extending a personal invitation has time-lapsed blessings and faith-filled fringe benefits.

It was a cold winter's night in December, but Capuchin Franciscan Father Paul Zaborowski and 25 faith-filled members of St. Ambrose Catholic Church on Park Heights Avenue were not afraid of the cold. They arrived at the Big Kmart shopping center on Wabash and Northern Parkway, armed with songs celebrating salvation history in their hearts and hundreds of Hershey candy bars in their hands.

The candy bars had different wrappings and were inscribed with a message, "We have found Him," inviting all to worship Him particularly on Christmas Day with the faith community of St. Ambrose Catholic Church.

While national news coverage was blasting stories of the miraculous generosity of the "lay-away angels" at various Kmart and Walmart stores, St. Ambrose took on the authentic role of "angel" being messengers extending invitations and singing carols. What a Christmas scene for the city! Their evangelization outreach spilled over to the neighboring laundromat where one-on-one witnessing about "the goodness of the Lord" occurred. On Christmas day, five new people walked into the Church of St. Ambrose for Mass. Each one said that they took to heart the invitation of the St. Ambrose angels at the Big Kmart shopping center. That was a time-lapsed blessing for themselves as well as St. Ambrose. To God be the glory!

During the same month, under the leadership of Youth Minister Norma Townsend, the youths of St. Ambrose frequented on Fridays the Rogers Avenue subway station, inviting young people to their faith-filled and social youth gatherings. They have been doing this outreach for some time. They too reaped faith-filled fringe benefits. These evangelization efforts are proof positive that employing a “faith-filled” strategy can matter.

As we are engaged in the parish planning process, let us not forget the power and purpose of growing our people in faith and growing our churches of faith. This story confirms the benefits of being strategic and joy-filled in the presentation of sharing Jesus and God’s word.

The Office of African American Catholic Ministries will encourage our parishes to be engaged in “Operation Faith Lift” through evangelization efforts to “get out on the streets” and evangelize during Lent. The theme will be “God’s grace is good and plenty,” coupled with the scriptural reference from St. Paul’s Letter to the Philippians (4:19): “My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”

All Operation Faith Lift teams are invited to meet and plan for the event at an Operation Faith Lift meeting on Tuesday, March 6, at 6 p.m., at St. Gregory the Great Parish, Baker and Gilmor Streets. “God is faithful and by him, we all are called to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ” (1Cor 1:9). And, “we know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28).

Evangelization indeed is a “matter that matters.”

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