

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B
September 8, 2024

Did you notice the pattern in today's Gospel reading? It's a twofold pattern that recurs over and over again in our Gospel readings. Yes, a twofold pattern... In the first movement, someone brings a friend to Jesus. In today's Gospel, reading we're told that "*people brought a deaf man to Jesus, a man who had a speech impediment. And they begged Jesus to lay his hands on them.*" In the second movement, Jesus does his thing. Jesus heals the man.

Yes, a two-fold pattern that recurs over and over again in Scripture... Andrew brings Simon to Jesus. Philip brings Nathaniel to the Lord. And in Mark's Gospel, four men – four friends – bring a paralyzed man to Jesus. And get this. Because of the crowd surrounding Jesus, they tear the roof open and lower the paralyzed man down to him. And what does Jesus do? He heals him, of course.

It's the same pattern, the same twofold movement. Friends bring friends to Jesus, and Jesus does his thing. He heals those who are in need of healing, and he invites others to follow him. The same twofold pattern...

And make no mistake about it, it's not just about physical healing. The blind man in today's Gospel story is suffering from more than physical blindness. In their reflections on this particular story, the Early Church Fathers make it clear that the poor man is suffering from spiritual blindness, too. He is in need of more than just physical healing. The blind man is in need of conversion, *shub* in Hebrew, *metanoia* in Greek.

So what does this Gospel reading say about us? Something important, in fact... Something critical... At the very end of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples that they are to "*go and make disciples.*" They are to bring people to Jesus. Why? So that Jesus can do his thing, of course, so that Jesus can heal the hearts of those who are brought to him.

Now, notice that Jesus didn't say: "*Some of you, go and make disciples.*" No, the context is clear. This responsibility – this calling to missionary discipleship – is part and parcel of following Jesus. It's not an add on. It's not optional. This responsibility comes with baptism, in fact. It's what we are all called to do.

Now at this point, you may be thinking: *“You’ve gone too far, Dan. Me, a missionary-disciple? No way, no how.”*

My response? Jesus’ response? *“Yes, you! You’ve been baptized, right? If so, you, too, have been challenged by Jesus to be a missionary-disciple.”*

Not all are called to door-knocking, of course. Few are called to street corner evangelization or to *“tearing roofs open.”* I get it. Let me suggest three ways, however, in which you can make a difference, three ways in which you can be the friend who brings people to Jesus so that he can do his thing.

First, we can pray together. And so we’ve added two petitions to our Prayers of the Faithful, which we’ll pray together at our Sunday Masses for the foreseeable future.

*As a parish community, we pray in a special way for our relatives, friends, and neighbors who have been hurt, scandalized, or ignored by those who serve the Church, that they might experience healing and a renewed openness to the promise of reconciliation... **We pray... Lord, hear our prayer.***

*And for our own parish community, that we – with faith in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist – might provide a place of welcome and rest to all who are estranged from the Church... **We pray... Lord, hear our prayer.***

Good!

Second, we can pray individually. How about one Rosary per week? Not too hard... Not too challenging... But to the extent that we believe in the efficacy of prayer – and we do! – very powerful indeed. In the entryway, you’ll find a signup sheet for a new ministry here at Holy Trinity . No meetings, no bylaws, no policies and procedures, none of that... A ministry that commits all who sign up to pray one rosary per week for the two petitions I just shared... Our goal is to have at least three of our parishioners praying the Rosary for our relatives, our friends, and our neighbors who are estranged from God and from the Church each and every day of the week.

Why? Again, because that’s what friends do. Friends bring people to Jesus.

Third, you can extend an invitation to those who are looking for answers to life's most important questions, those who are hoping for a deeper, more meaningful relationship with Jesus, and those who have wondered, perhaps, what it might mean to become a Catholic. You can invite them to attend one of our OCIA inquiry sessions that will begin on Sunday, September 29.

In your bulletin, you'll find a bookmark with all the details. Share it with a friend, a co-worker, a neighbor, with anyone, in fact, who might be looking for something more in their lives. We'll be handing these bookmarks out at our food booth over the several days of the Fall Festival.

That said, consider yourself as having been commissioned. Share your bookmark with someone you know who might be looking for Jesus. You can be sure that Jesus is looking for them. And if you need more bookmarks, no problem. We have plenty.

We can all do this, can't we? No door knocking... No street corner evangelization... No "*tearing roofs open*," as essential as these activities might be. No, something simple... Something we can all do... Prayer, both collective and individual... And sharing a bookmark... It's as simple as that.

Yes, we are all called – by virtue of our baptisms – to be missionary disciples, every one of us. We are called to bring others to Jesus. Again, that's what friends do.