

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time “C” Cycle July 2-3. 2016

As we celebrate the 240th anniversary of our nation’s Declaration of Independence, we pray that all Americans may live up to the ideals upon which our country was founded especially life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The Declaration explicitly mentions God as Creator and as the One who wills that his creatures pursue these ideals.

The Declaration was written and approved in Philadelphia. This city and its surrounding area played a prominent role in the quest for independence, for which we can be justifiably proud. In a spiritual way, we can also be justifiably proud in that, unlike any other diocese in the United States, we have 2 canonized saints, St. John Neumann and St. Katherine Drexel.

Both of these were missionaries. John Neumann came from his native Bohemia to bring our Catholic faith to people in several states, often traveling by horseback. When he was ordained the 4th bishop of Philadelphia, he continued his missionary work. Katherine Drexel, a wealthy heiress, spent her energies and fortune in evangelizing African and Native Americans in the South and Southwest of our country, founding a religious community of women to continue this work, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

These 2 zealous individuals followed the model which we heard in today’s Gospel. St. Luke tells us that Jesus appointed 72, among them perhaps women as well as men, to prepare the way for him. They were to travel lightly, to proclaim peace and to announce the advent of God’s kingdom or presence. They were sent to gain disciples or followers for Jesus.

The number 72 is symbolic and represents the number of nations known to exist at the time. This indicates that the mission of Jesus is meant for all peoples. This is why our Church, which Christ founded, is called “catholic,” which means universal.

That 72 others were sent out as missionaries means that all disciples of Jesus are also apostles, called to share their faith in him. Our baptism and confirmation are bestowed on us not only to give us a special and loving relationship with the Lord, by which we become Jesus’ disciples. The graces of these sacraments are also given to empower us to share this faith with others. Not only priests and religious are called to live and share the faith, but also all the baptized and confirmed. We are all to be apostles. We are all to be missionaries.

Practically speaking, how do we do this? I would suggest several ways.

- 1. Prayer: before we can bring God to others, we must be in touch with him ourselves. We also pray for others to come to faith or to revive it.**
- 2. Care: be sensitive to the needs of others, bring them comfort, peace, encouragement, and joy, especially to those who are sick or lonely or elderly who might need someone to drive them to food shop or to Church.**
- 3. Share: be always ready to give a reason for your faith when the occasion presents itself. This involves some spiritual reading or viewing EWTN.**
- 4. Dare: Invite people to come to Church with you, to give them some religious reading material, or refer them to the parish.**

You may have heard about Tim Tebow, a former NFL quarterback and now a TV sports analyst, who has always been very public about his faith in Jesus Christ. Just last week, he was on a Delta Airline flight from Atlanta to Phoenix, when a man suffered a heart attack. Tebow went back to the man and his wife to comfort and pray with them. When the plane landed, he retrieved their luggage, and accompanied them to the hospital. In my opinion, Tebow acted as a committed Christian disciple and missionary apostle.

If I might make a commercial for a ministry we are trying to develop in our parish, which has worked well in other parishes. It is to have a group of parish emissaries or ambassadors to visit others in the community, many of whom are Catholic, even registered parishioners, but not practicing and to give them something from the parish: a printed message or invitation, or publication, or the like.

As part of the Church of Philadelphia, we have a glorious spiritual heritage. May we claim our share in this heritage by imitating the missionary zeal of Saint John Neumann and St. Katherine Drexel. It will bring us peace, joy, and everlasting life with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.