

TRINITY SUNDAY Year B – Homily 02
“Make Disciples of All Nations”

Are you familiar with the words *kerygma* and *didache*?

Those two ancient Greek words describe the mandate that Jesus gives each one of us in today’s gospel: to evangelize and catechize; to make disciples and to teach them to live the Commandments of Jesus.

To explain a little more fully, the word *kerygma* means to proclaim something, usually for the first time. So when St. Peter stood up after the Pentecost event and spoke about the resurrection of Jesus for the first time, that was the earliest *kerygma*, the first proclamation of the Good News.

Those that believed on the basis of what he said, joined the church and were baptized, then entered upon a period of deepening their faith, of learning what it was they were baptized into. That is called in Greek, *didache*. It means an on-going catechesis or learning about what it means to believe in Jesus, to know him and love him and follow him.

As baptized followers of Jesus, we are called to both activities, to evangelize and to teach. First, we are to be always open to announcing to others the fresh insights and actions of the Spirit of Jesus in our lives, to others who may not even know him, who may be ignorant of their faith, even if they happen to be baptized. We are called to evangelize, to announce the good news of Jesus, to enter into *kerygma*.

At the same time, we must never stop learning more about our faith, what it means to believe in and follow Jesus, and to share that knowledge and relationship with others, to help them understand and deepen their own faith. We are also called to catechize, to do *didache*.

The Gospel today is like a Last Will and Testament of Jesus, just before he ascends into heaven and is seen by the apostles for the last time. It is significant that the angel asks them why they are looking into heaven. The message is that they must be about not looking for Jesus to come back, but to get to work building up the reign of God, the very life of God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, right here and right now, where we are, on this earth, in this place.

That is the true meaning of the ascension of Jesus. He came to initiate the reign of God here on earth, to bridge heaven and earth, to make present the very life of God as Trinity, as a family united in love. In his return to heaven, he doesn’t just leave us. He takes our humanity with him, and leaves his divinity with us. He is present in his Spirit to empower us to help realize that reign of God here on earth. That loving relationship that the Father has with the Son in the Holy Spirit, is meant to become more and more a reality here on

earth through the presence and ministry of his followers who make up his Body, the Church.

Jesus leaves it up to us to make disciples, to help others believe in who he is and his plan for us. We are to initiate or baptize them into a relationship with the Holy Trinity, with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And finally, we are to teach them to keep the commandments that Jesus gave us. Surprisingly, that has not happened to any great degree for all too many people.

Just out of curiosity, how many of you here know that Great Commandment of Jesus by heart? Just recently I gave a baptism preparation and then a First Communion preparation for two groups of people in one mission. I asked them if they knew by heart the Great Commandment of Jesus. Both the groups that gathered in that community had heard of and knew a few of the Ten Commandments, but not one of them was aware that Jesus had left us a Great Commandment that far surpassed the Ten Commandments.

Very simply put, that commandment is for us to love the Lord our God with our whole minds, hearts, strength and soul, and then to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. That simple commandment summarizes the whole bible, all the teachings of the Law and the Prophets, as Jesus himself said.

I continue to be amazed and dismayed at how that Great Commandment continues to be ignored and down-played, to the highest levels of the Church. Just recently I listened to a CD of Francis Cardinal Arinze on the Catechism of the Church. In his talk he dwells on the Ten Commandments, but makes no mention of the Great Commandment of Jesus. I was very disappointed.

Some time later, someone gave me a small pocket catechism that I took the time to read through. Again I was disappointed to note that although this catechism was otherwise well done and quite thorough, it reviewed the Ten Commandments but also made no reference whatsoever to the Great Commandment of Jesus. How can we keep that commandment if we don't even know what it is? There is a great need for more *didache* in the life of the Church.

What gave me hope and encouragement in that same mission was the willingness of three adults to become catechists. One helped me to prepare a group of parents for the baptism of their children, and she was happy to do so. We worked on some materials that she could use and hopefully she will continue to grow in her ability to share her faith and knowledge of baptism with subsequent groups of parents.

Another source of hope was the two other adults who were willing to become catechists and prepare youth for the sacraments of confirmation and Holy Eucharist. We worked together as a team to prepare a group for their First Communion that Easter. They were also very happy to do so and they look forward to continuing to grow in their ability to share their faith and knowledge with candidates for the sacraments of initiation in the future.

When in Montreal recently, I visited with a friend and his wife, Claude and Claudette Sheehy. They are in charge of the Cursillo movement for the diocese of Ste. Hyacinthe. They see the Cursillo holding great promise for the Church in Quebec precisely because it combines both kerygma and didache. They note that young people are starting to come to Cursillo where they encounter kerygma. They meet Jesus for the first time and get to know Jesus. Some of them are former jailbirds, with tattoos all over them. One of them watches the movie *Jesus of Nazareth* by Zafarelli every Easter now.

The immediate challenge that faces Claude and Claudette, however, is didache, how to teach these neophytes what it means to be a follower of Jesus. They are constantly seeking ways to teach them what it means to be a member of the Church and to live a life of prayer, worship and the sacraments. They are looking for ways to insert them into the life of the worshipping faith community. But they find joy and deep meaning in rising to this challenge.

The Eucharist that we celebrate today is part of the catechesis that Jesus taught us. May our celebration help us to grow in faith and willingness to share our faith and our love with others as disciples of Jesus who are also willing to share the *kerygma*, the Good News with others as well as the *didache* that will help them to better understand the great gift of faith that they have been baptized into.