

Pastoral page

We Are Called to Teach All Nations

When Jesus told his disciples “Go teach all nations,” He was giving them a mission to spread the Gospel message throughout the world. The apostles accepted that challenge and began their missionary work by preaching first to their fellow Jews, then to the Jewish communities settled in neighboring countries, and finally extending the message to the Gentiles in those countries.

We as Catholics have received the call to be followers of Christ. We are the Gentile people to whom Christ sent his apostles. Who in our family history was the first to respond to the call of Christ to be believers? Whoever it was not only accepted the gift of faith from Christ but also the responsibility of spreading that faith. The early converts had to be and were active in spreading the faith.

As the Church grew and established parishes throughout the world, many Catholics felt that the work of evangelization was the domain of priests and nuns. In practical terms this was true because many priests, nuns (and later on, lay people) left their homes, families and countries to work in the foreign missions.

As I write this on September 6, 2001 Archbishop Rembert Weakland and Bishop Richard Sklba are traveling to the Dominican Republic to visit a parish staffed by our diocesan priests for the last 20 years. Prior to that, Archbishop Cousins accepted the responsibility of a parish in Paraguay, South America. The Paraguay parish was close to my classmates and me because two of our classmates served there for a few years. In fact the government “kicked out” the first classmate because he was too much of a radical for them. Their designation of his activities as radical was the result of his very great concern for the poor and his efforts to help them.

In our own community, parish members banded together to help their beloved former pastor, Fr. John Kapellen, who left Cedarburg to become the pastor of St. Boniface in Milwaukee. For the last 30 years we have had monthly collections for the benefit of St. Boniface, now All Saints Catholic Church. The new church is the result of the merger of three parishes in Milwaukee. It just happens that the pastor, Fr. Dennis Dirx, was our weekend help 25 years ago and also served at our diocesan parish in the Dominican Republic.

This past year our parish agreed to twin with St. Paul Parish in Mukono, Uganda. A group of our parishioners went to Uganda this summer to learn more about the parish and pledge our financial and spiritual support.

On the home front we are all reminded of our Confirmation commitment to “teach all nations.” That commitment is fulfilled first of all by parents who are the first teachers of their children. Secondly, the whole parish community is involved in spreading the word through our parish school and the religious education program.

Whether we take a very active role or a passive one we are all reminded that we have a very important responsibility to respond to Christ’s call to “Go teach all nations.”

-Written by Fr. Ed Wawrzyniakowski for the *Messenger* parish newsletter, Fall 2001.