

## Putting First Things First: The Importance and Power of the Kerygma

### 1. Pentecost

The birth of the Church and power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the good news of what God has done in Jesus the Lord.

### 2. The Church in the Modern World and the Summons to a New Evangelization

- a. Vatican 2 and the New Evangelization
- b. The New Evangelization is primarily focused on re-evangelization
- c. The New Evangelization is Christocentric

*“Encounter with the Living Jesus Christ: The way to conversion, communion and solidarity in America. Put this way, the theme makes clear the centrality of the person of the Risen Christ, present in the life of the Church, calling people to conversion. The starting point of such a program of evangelization is in fact encounter with the Lord.”*

-Pope JP2, *Ecclesia in America*, 3

- d. Two illustrations.
  - i. Dave’s friend shared about his personal relationship with Jesus
  - ii. Archbishop Dolan’s quote:

*“If you do a sociology of the people that leave the church, many of them, most of them, if I understand the stats correctly, go to the more evangelical mega-churches — where they find the truths of the faith, the preaching of the Bible, the Gospel, the teachings of Jesus, preached with particular vigor and clarity.*

*And I wonder if we have to examine our conscience as a church to say: Have we done that? Have we passed on the truth to people, or have we gotten a little too subjective, and too much into diluting, watering down the essentials of the faith?”*

-First interview as Archbishop of NY, April 15, 2009

### 3. The New Testament Proclamation – Kerygma

- a. The central message of Jesus – *The kingdom of God is at hand for you! Repent and believe the good news!* (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 9:2, 10:9)

- b. With Jesus' death and resurrection the apostles focused the proclamation on the King (Acts 2:36; Romans 10:9,10). Jesus, the Divine King was now reigning with all authority and power over the cosmos and was with them to confirm the preaching of the gospel.
- c. The N.T. writers assume a common tradition that presents two components: preaching or proclamation (kerygma) of what God has done in Jesus of Nazareth; and teaching (didache) which presents the ethical standards for right behavior on the part of believers.
  - i. Kerygma = gospel/proclamation of what God has done in Jesus of Nazareth
  - ii. Didache = teaching/law of Christ: what we do in Christ. *Ideal of Christian moral law*
  - iii. The kerygma always came first, followed by the didache
  - iv. The Kerygma is called the gospel. It is what gives the Church her power. It focuses on Christ and what God has done through his death, rising and Lordship. From this proclamation flows the power to live the life of Christ, the moral life of the Church
  - v. Seen in many of St Paul's epistles where he begins with the kerygma and follows with the didache, e.g., Ephesians chapters 1-3 & 4-6
- d. Examples of the Kerygma -proclamation (Acts 2:23, 32, 36, 37-41; 4:10-12; 5:28-32; 10:35-44; I Cor. 15:1-5; Phil. 2:5-11)

*'But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach (kerygma)); because, **if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.** For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved.'*

-Romans 10: 8-10

- i. Christ's death, rising and Lordship
4. **What must we do to be saved?** Linking the Kerygma with the 'how to' of choosing to make Jesus Lord of my life?
- a. Unbelievers – faith, repentance, sacraments and life of the Church
  - b. Baptized – actualizing the graces of the sacraments of initiation

## 5. Practical application

- a. The Gospel *"is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith..."* (Romans 1:16; 1Cor. 2:1, 2)

*The Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims."*

-Paul VI, EN, 18

- i. Learn the difference between simply talking about Jesus and proclaiming the truths of the good news. There is divine power in the message of what God has done in Jesus of Nazareth to convert hearts.
- b. *No one can say, Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit* (1Cor. 12:3b)
  - i. God's initiative through you and in the evangelized
- c. Understanding these two points (above) will help you understand why Discovering Christ is effective, help you in personally witnessing and, is essential for homilies, RCIA, and all catechesis
- d. Learn the basics of the message for our personal opportunities to share our faith in Christ
  - i. Listen to: Sharing Christ DVD or audio session 5: Presenting the Good News
- e. When presenting the Gospel to others, a flexible approach is necessary, while remaining true to the essential content
  - i. St Paul in Athens (Acts 17:22ff) or before King Agrippa (Acts 26), or the Philippian prison guard (Acts 16: 30)
  - ii. Trust the Holy Spirit to tailor the message to fit the situation (Mk 13:9-11)
  - iii. Defining factors: time, type of relationship, etc.
  - iv. Study the Acts of the Apostles