

There was a couple who had been married 50 years. The husband was concerned that his wife was going deaf, but he didn't want to scare or embarrass her so he came up with a way to test her hearing without telling her what he was doing.

He went to the furthest room in the house and shouted: "What's for dinner?" No answer. Then he moved into the living room and once again shouted: "What's for dinner?" Still no answer. Finally, he went to the kitchen where he was only five feet away and once again shouted: "What's for dinner?" to which she shouted back: "For the third time... MEATLOAF.

Sometimes, we think God can't hear or isn't listening when we call him. But the reality is more like we aren't hearing or listening when He's calling us.

When we were baptized, we were called to evangelize, to go and make disciples of all nations. "Go" isn't a passive word. It's an action word. "Make" is the word that defines that action. And the words: "disciples of all nations" tell us where to perform that action.

In today's gospel, Jesus tells us how to get the job done. He tells us we must **love others as He loves us**. That means that our love for each other must be without limits. We must die to ourselves for the love of others, because it's only in that way that we can follow the pattern Jesus gave us. It's how the world will find Him...in us. And others can't find Him in us if we're not out encountering others. What's the point of a candle under a bushel basket?

Most of us don't feel comfortable evangelizing. It's easier to just come to church on Sunday and meet our obligation to attend to Mass. But if all we do is come to Mass on Sunday, we'll meet an obligation, but we won't fulfill our purpose.

Loving Jesus requires loving **like** Jesus...being forgiving and merciful. If we really want to know and love Jesus, we've got to move Him from our head to our heart. We have to respond to our call to evangelize the way Paul and Barnabas did in our first reading.

They went out and strengthened the spirit of the disciples and exhorted them to persevere in the faith saying: *it is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God*. They let love lead the way...and the chips fall where they may.

But how can we do that in this day and age? It's easier than you might think. A week ago, I was one of number of Knights of Columbus who each stood outside a local market for two hours soliciting funds for exceptional children. It was a lesson in evangelization.

Each Knight was given a florescent vest with the words, "help exceptional children/Knights of Columbus" emblazoned across its front and back.

Next, we were given the tools for our assignment: an adapted plastic coffee canister to collect funds and handfuls of tootsie rolls to give anyone kind enough to make a contribution.

Finally, we were sent to our stations, like Paul and Barnabas. Mine was at the less-traveled end of the store where foot traffic was slow, and many people went out of their way not to make eye contact with me. But in Christian charity, I gave them the benefit of the doubt.

Maybe some of these folks were hurting financially themselves, but wanted to give; or maybe they were dealing with their own life challenges. Whatever the reason, after 30 minutes, I'd only collected two one-dollar bills and an even smaller amount in change.

At days end, 10 Knights of Columbus had \$441 to show for 16 hours of work. But even though the amount raised wasn't what we had hoped, here's why the day was a success:

During those slow times, I reflected on my own baptismal call. I realized that if nobody put a penny in any of our containers, I was there with others living my faith. Just by being there, we were proclaiming the gospel...showing everyone who saw us that all people, regardless of age or mental capacity, are children of God. We weren't there to tell them; we were there to show them, by our love for exceptional children who we didn't even know.

That changed my perspective. Then a few people started to change my attitude.

One young man dropped in twenty dollars. Latter, two women each tossed in a five, with the comment that they had relatives with Downe Syndrome. Then they thanked ME for "being there" for them. Then there was an older woman who stopped, dug into her purse, and donated her last two dollars.

But what moved me most was a young check-out girl in my line-of-sight the whole afternoon. Every so often I noticed her glancing at me. Later, during her break, she went out of her way to come over and put a dollar in my canister. I offered her a tootsie roll but she declined, pointing to her braces.

When it was quitting time, I made a point to go in and thank her for her generosity. I also gave her one of our parish evangelization cards with an invitation to join us sometime here at church. I never did find out why she donated that dollar.

The next time you feel uncomfortable expressing your faith to others, think about my experience that Saturday afternoon...when I learned that by putting myself in a position to evangelize others, God used those very others to evangelize me...when I learned first-hand that love can only go on by us going out. Unlike Paul and Barnabas, we don't have to travel as far as Lystra, Iconium and Antioch to get the job done.

Our parish evangelization website at [www.evangelizepittsburgh.com](http://www.evangelizepittsburgh.com) offers 51 ministries that provide a way for us to love others as Jesus loves us. And our own patron saint tells us: *"May you use the gifts that you have received to pass on the love that has been given to you."*

As Catholic Christians especially, we are called to action. The truth is that the world will only come to know Jesus through our love. Bringing about that new heaven and new earth John talked about in our reading from the Book of Revelation can only happen when we respond to our own baptismal call and go make a difference by making disciples.

So go make a difference!

Go make a difference!

For the third time...Go make a difference!