

## Chaplain's Bulletin July 16, 2023



Dear Folks,

One of the things that really drains our energy is the feeling that we are working and not accomplishing anything. Ever feel like you are talking to a wall or nailing jello to a tree?

When we try to make things better, and things just get worse, when you put out your best effort and people seem not to care, when you keep speaking the truth but people still believe falsehoods, there is a temptation to give up and say, “What’s the use?”

God seems to have no problem putting us in situations where we are frustrated.

Ezekiel heard God say “Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have been in revolt against me to this very day. Their children are bold of face and stubborn of heart—to them I am sending you. You shall say to them: Thus says the Lord God. And whether they hear or resist—they are a rebellious house—they shall know that a prophet has been among them Ezekiel 2:1-5).” Jesus had many people walk away from Him, and many just refused to consider what He was saying. We are not going to do better than Jesus.

That said, this is not license to neglect learning how to share well. I have been on the receiving end of a great many extended talks that not only did nothing to persuade me but convinced me how clueless this person was. They seemed to go on and on, believing that they will be heard because of their many words (reminds me of Matt 6:7) and all this time I was getting further and further away from their thinking. Learning how to connect to other people requires empathy for how they think (that does not mean agreeing but does mean recognizing what makes sense to them. St. Paul did a great job of this in Athens in Acts 17, though people were not converted right away and many laughed. Part of the image of seed is something that doesn’t sprout instantly; it takes time to grow. Changing the way we have thought for years and years is usually not done overnight. It can take years and several different experiences to shift our perspective.

Sometimes people are afraid of the term “evangelism” because they think that means they need to take someone from unbeliever to catechumen all by themselves. We remember God is in charge, and we are a small part of His much larger plan. Jesus’ image of seeds reminds us that very little things can make a big difference. There are some simple ways to cast seeds:

1. Learn something new about your faith and share it (it’s like sharing that we have found a new recipe or a new app for our phone, just simple conversation not a sermon).
2. Tell someone one good thing about your faith community (think of how you share how good the burgers are at a particular restaurant or how nice a certain park is).

3. Introduce yourself to someone you don't know at church (relationships can strengthen people's connection to the church. Some don't want to talk, but they at least know that people care.

4. Create a holy moment (Michael Kelly's term. It refers to a moment in which God's love is more visible. If people know you are a Christian, and they are impressed by how well you treat people, that is being an ambassador for Christ).

An evangelist can simply be someone who looks for opportunities to cast seeds. One good encounter, however tiny, might predispose someone to be a bit more open to the next person that God sends them. Imagine the fun of seeing in heaven how seeds you have sown have borne fruit.

Blessings,

Fr. Jim