

Reminders and Resources for the winter 2025 Homily Series

The Greatest Story Ever Told

Week Two — Why share it?

The greatest story ever told is the remarkable life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ — a story of immeasurable Love.

Gospel Connection: (Luke 2:22-40) In today's Gospel, Jesus is presented to the world. Simeon speaks about the child Jesus, saying he has come for "all the peoples." This means God is not among them just for Israel, but for the Gentiles too. In other words, God's Love is not exclusive; it is available to everyone. **This certainly is Good News.**

"God's love is planted inside each of us as the Holy Spirit who, according to Jesus, 'will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you' (John 14:26). Love is who you are. All I can do is remind you of what you already know deep within your True Self and **invite you to live connected to this Source.**" — Richard Rohr, OFM

There are infinite ways of experiencing God and once we receive that Love and live from its center, we become disciples of Christ. **We cannot help but respond.**

Our relationship with God is a lot like any other relationship in that to grow stronger we need to spend time together, communicate, listen, trust, act, and often sacrifice. This is what love looks like.

As our relationship with God deepens, we may ask "**What am I to do with this Love?**" Often we intuit that we are not meant to keep this Love to ourselves.

St. Thomas the Apostle Parish has evangelized in many ways over the past 40 years. We are now invited to **build on that momentum**, to develop new ways of evangelizing.

Why do we evangelize? Jesus asked us to continue his work, to share the incredible Love of God with others. People need to know there is a God who loves them, knows them intimately, and that their lives have meaning and purpose.

The Great Commission (Matthew 28: 19-20): Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, **I am with you always**, until the end of the age.

God will always pursue us with Love and oftentimes by way of another. When we share the Good News of God's Love with someone else we grow closer to both God and the other person.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops explains that **evangelization is a reaching outward**. They write, “The fruits of evangelization are changed lives and a changed world—holiness and justice, spirituality and peace. The validity of our having accepted the Gospel does not only come from what we feel or what we know; it comes also from the way we serve others, especially the poorest, the most marginal, the most hurting, the most defenseless, and the least loved. An evangelization that stays inside ourselves is not an evangelization into the Good News of Jesus Christ.”

Homework: Share a time when you encountered the love of God, perhaps a time when you felt peace, comfort, joy... OR, ask a person of faith that you know to share with you an experience of when they felt God’s love.

“Dare to love and to be a real friend. The love you give and receive is a reality that will lead you closer and closer to God as well as those whom God has given you to love.”
— Henri J.M. Nouwen

Prayer
O God,
May I be a living sign
of your generous love,
and help everyone
to live more intimately with you.
Amen*

* *This is an excerpt from “Prayers for Our World in Our Times - wpd” found at: https://www.worldprayers.org/archive/prayers/invocations/o_infinite_god_of_life.html*

Resources:

- An Introduction to Alpha (a tool St. Thomas will be utilizing to explore the deepest questions of life from a Christian perspective): <https://alphausa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Alpha-Catholics-Intro-Guide-2023-Updated.pdf>
- Catechesis, Evangelization, Faith Into Action — An article by Bishop Ronald A. Hicks: <https://faithmag.com/catechesis-evangelization-faith-action>
- Pope Francis’ address on evangelization, March 2023: <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2023/documents/20230308-udienza-generale.pdf>
- USCCB article on evangelization: https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/evangelization/go-and-make-disciples/what_is_evangelization_go_and_make_disciples
- Summary of *Conversion* by Fr. Donald Haggerty: <https://prodigalcatholic.com/2024/07/17/summary-of-conversion-spiritual-insights-into-an-essential-encounter-with-god-by-fr-donald-haggerty/>
- *How to Explain Your Faith* by John Pritchard: <https://www.amazon.com/Explain-Your-Faith-John-Pritchard/dp/0814631789>
- *Becoming the Good News — A New Approach to Parish Evangelization* by Michael J. Sanem: https://litpress.org/Products/6858/Becoming-the-Good-News?srsId=AfmBOopmeHXc9ekHFPAxUO_ug037rNJpuiF-z9L_N2bghmRA0SqrrNZy