

**EVANGELIZATION**  
**(Becoming a Witness)**  
**(5/2/06 TOPIC OF DISCUSSION)**  
**PRESENTED BY FATHER ED JOCSON**

**Opening Prayer**

**A Reading from the Holy Gospel of St. Luke 24:35-41. “They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, ‘It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.’ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when He broke the bread. While they were still talking about this, Jesus Himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.’ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, He asked them, ‘Do you have anything here to eat?’ They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and He took it and ate it in their presence.”**

**This scripture goes on to describe Jesus’ commission to His Apostles to be His witnesses regarding His message of repentance and forgiveness that they were to preach in His name to all nations. This was His mandate to them, but it continues to be the commitment of all baptized Christians. Once you have truly met Jesus Christ it becomes a compulsion to be a witness to this awesome message of salvation. This is a shared experience. We are Easter people who have ‘witnessed’ in faith, the resurrection. Christ has brought light out of darkness. Just as we experienced at the Easter Vigil the dawning of light in a darkened church, when the candlelight was spread among the congregation, so too must we, as Christians, spread the light of the Good News to a darkened world.**

**As the newly initiated present this evening shared their experience of joy it was evident that a significant change had occurred in their inner being. Each one expressed a feeling of overwhelming happiness. The sacramental inner cleansing of Baptism, the receiving of the Body and**

**Blood of Christ in Holy Communion and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation are outward signs of inner grace. The community of St. Michael was privileged to witness this celebration and to join in the renewal of baptismal promises. St. Luke ends his gospel with Christ's promise of Pentecost as he ascends to the Father.**

**Beginning in Jerusalem, the apostles began their glorious task of Evangelization. The Gospel (Good News) message is simple and yet profound: A loving Savior, Jesus Christ, has redeemed us from sin and death and opened for all people a new way of life that leads to happiness with God forever in heaven. This is a message that goes beyond head knowledge. It is a truth to be internalized so as to shape the very core and focus of our lives. The church exists in order to evangelize the world; to bring the good news to the farthest reaches of our planet. We as members of the church – the Body of Christ – are called upon to be involved in this mission. It is a message to be preached in word and in the way we live our lives. We follow Jesus Christ who is The Way, The Truth, and The Life. The Holy Spirit is Jesus' gift to us; He helps us in this task; He comforts us when we fail or hurt, He Advocates for us and He counsels us.**

**We become evangelizers as an outgrowth of our relationship with Jesus Christ who performs a life transforming work in our lives. Conversion is a life long process. It began with the sacraments of initiation and the ultimate goal is to become like Jesus. The Father wants to see His son reflected in each of us. Striving to do good works without focusing on serving the Lord may result in attitudes of self righteousness and empty self-fulfillment. In his encyclical "Evangelii Nuntiandi" Pope Paul VI spells out the desired attitude of the Evangelizer who, as a messenger of the Good News of Jesus Christ, must "Put on the new self" and "Be reconciled to God."**

**As believers (with this new way of life), we ourselves become evangelizers. In our own experience, it is hard to keep from sharing any exciting message, experience or life-changing event. We are creatures of compulsive communication. How then can we keep such glorious truths to ourselves? We should be compelled to shout them from the rooftops.**

### **Church's Teaching on Evangelization:**

**The Good News of Salvation certainly has a specific content – a “message” which we can talk or catechize about or explain. This “content” refers to the action of a person whose own words and deeds saved us i.e. Jesus Christ, Son of God, our Lord and Savior, who continues to be the One who saves us, for He is The Way, The Truth, and The Life. Through the promised Holy Spirit, Christ is experienced in the Church - His Body. In sharing with other members of the Church and celebrating the sacraments, we are gifted with His presence.**

**The diverse endeavor of evangelization cannot occur without conversion within the evangelizer. The dynamic of evangelization profoundly changes us as we put on the new person of Christ in our own lives.**

**Evangelization is a multifaceted undertaking in which we assist others to embrace the Good News by embracing a person, Jesus Christ, and His Body, the Church. By Surrendering to that loving embrace, disciples of the Lord witness by word and deed to the salvation won for us in Christ Jesus. The ultimate purpose of evangelization is to open the door, to bring others to explore further, so that the Gospel may be explicitly proclaimed. The result of this exploration is to help others enter into the great company of believers, the Church, for the Church, Christ's Body, is the instrument of Jesus' proclamation and mission of salvation to every succeeding generation.**

### **Methods of Evangelizing:**

**We can witness by our words, by our actions (which sometimes speak louder than words) by our attitudes, our expectant faith, and our long suffering faith. As the popular hymn goes “They will know we are Christians by our Love.” Yes we are called to be witnesses in this 21<sup>st</sup> century to the timeless truths of salvation, truths about Jesus Christ who is the Alpha the Omega the Beginning and the End. He is the same Yesterday, Today and Forever.**