

Witnesses and Apostles

The challenge

*“There is an intermediate situation, particularly in countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger Churches as well, where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel. In this case what is needed is a **“new evangelization”** or a **“re-evangelization.”** (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* #33)*

What for other people may be a source of discouragement is for us precisely what challenges us, brings enthusiasm and gives us a desire to do something to face the task that lies ahead. The times we live in are very much like St. Paul’s own times. Just imagine St. Paul walking into Corinth for the first time, one of the leading commercial towns. Corinth was a port city, where businessmen came and went constantly, people from many different places. No one would have thought the Church would be planted there, but this is where St. Paul chooses to go. He faces the city alone, though it was known to be very indifferent to those attempting to introduce faith; there is the Apostle of the Gentiles. He doesn’t shy away from the challenges he knows he’s up against. He trusts in the Lord, and in his heart, St. Paul deeply loves these people. These are the people God has entrusted to him. It is true that he was himself a Jew; a believer from a religious family, from whom their religion was passed for generations past. St. Paul understood that the statutes of the Lord call for us to reach out to those fallen away, to gather everyone for Christ.

John Paul II stated clearly in one of his documents in the year 2000, *“over the years, I have often repeated the summons to the new evangelization. I do so again now, especially in order to insist that we must rekindle in ourselves the impetus of the beginnings and allow ourselves to be filled with the ardour of the apostolic preaching which followed Pentecost. We must revive in ourselves the burning conviction of Paul, who cried out: “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:16).*

This passion will not fail to stir in the Church a new sense of mission, which cannot be left to a group of “specialists” but must involve the responsibility of all the members of the People of God. Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him. A new apostolic outreach is needed, which will be lived as the everyday commitment of Christian communities and groups. This should be done however with the respect due to the different paths of different people and with sensitivity to the diversity of cultures in which the Christian message must be planted, in such a way that the particular values of each people will not be rejected but purified and brought to their fullness. (Novo Millennio Ineunte, January 6, 2001)

How many people do not know Jesus or have never experienced the power of faith? Many of these people are in our lives today- family members, our friends, people we know, classmates, roommates... so many people do not know who Jesus is. Many people already have their own ‘opinion’ about religion. They can be considered asleep. Why call them asleep? Because they are not dead, they are waiting for someone to wake them up, they are searching for something they do not know how to describe or explain. They may not even know it is missing from their lives, but they await a change, a transformation*****.

We have a message because we know from experience that the contact with Jesus through faith is transforming, life-changing and saving!! We are witnesses of what it means to encounter Jesus. More than one among us can say, ‘I have been asleep in the presence of the great love of Jesus Christ.’ How many of us have been fervent after a Fragua, a volunteer experience, a holy hour or a mission? Feeling on fire for Christ and wanting to spread the news to everyone who could hear! I can still remember what it meant to me to see a simple slideshow of the Passion of Christ. It made an indelible mark on me, a deep

impression. Jesus powerfully affected me and drew me to Himself. His love is so vast, we cannot begin to fathom what he endured on the cross for you and me.

Many times we suffer because of the desire for our friends, relatives, and others to know Jesus!!! I would like to suggest a little exercise: go out and look at people's faces- on campus, in the street- look thoroughly at each face and ask yourself: 'does he/she know Christ? Has he/she found Him?' Imagine those friends you would like to bring to Jesus praising Him, going on a mission, reading the Scriptures. This is not a mind game, it is a way to open your eyes and understand that those friends of yours could be great witnesses of Jesus, that they have an inner capacity for God, they were hard-wired for God. Out there lays the opportunity for them to start a long and lasting relationship with Christ, meant to last till eternal life.

It seems that many of our friends fell asleep after their baptism and it hasn't had an effect on their lives. Maybe Catholic friends can even say they've received their First Communion, or went through Confirmation classes and were confirmed. They may remember some of what was taught in Sunday School or catechism classes years ago, or a prayer said when they were little. For many this is the extent of their faith practice, never having had a single supernatural encounter with God, though many times feeling a great spiritual need. As an example, once we were going very early to Mass and from there to classes. We had to pass by another church on our way. There we found, kneeling on the sidewalk, half drunk, a young man hugging the bars of the church gates. He was crying and asking God for help. I can still remember that image, which is not such a common one, and I thought to myself 'How many people are probably in the same desperate situation, so many who have moments of lucidity, who realize they need something the world cannot offer, but who do not follow through.' Those are moments of grace, of clarity in the soul, when we see clearly the path to follow. Not everyone will react with an exterior manifestation like the student on the sidewalk did. Maybe they won't kneel publicly, maybe they don't kneel at all, but in their souls they have knelt and invoked the Lord. As the psalmist said: "I look up to the mountains, from where shall my help come? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth." (Psalm 121: 1-2)

Many of us have experienced this new evangelization, and our faith is one of the fruits of it. We know what it means to '*have lost a living sense of the faith*' or maybe we never had an active faith at all, and now we experience what it is like to know Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. We carry the new evangelization in our blood, and this is what we mean when we talk about 'apostolate'.

What can I do?

This is the question of many who see the world, and the challenge it presents. 'What can *I* do? How can *I* start something?' For many people these questions are a source of distress because they feel just like the writer of the missionary prayer felt when he says, 'we are taken aback by the disproportion of your command and our strength.' However, the prayer continues 'But faith lets us understand that you are at our side in this task.' Some are still discouraged even when they hear the second part. We can become skeptical and distrustful of any advance, of any possible way to work toward our ideals. We are witnesses of many people who once had a desire to change society, to stop world hunger, or to bring about a revolution. Rather than carry out their ambitions, some of these people lost hope or gave up, and became content with low worldly standards. It is vitally important that we learn and understand that we are not called to finish a universal task, but to add to it; to run the race that only I can run, to do the part that I am called to do, to live up to Christ's standards, and to communicate God's life to those around me.

Mother Teresa was a specialist of hope; with her life as a testimony, she did not need many words. Since the time she picked up the first dying person in streets of Calcutta she saw dozens sharing mistreatment and abandonment. She didn't grow desperate because of the many she didn't help, but she did what she was capable of. She didn't think she would solve the problems of poverty in India. But the one man she picked up that day was treated as a son of God because one woman cared for him and helped him to have a dignified death.

We must accept that we have limitations. I cannot do everything I would like to do. It is consoling however, to know that Jesus does not call me to do everything, only my part. This rule may even be applied to other areas of life such as family, friends, work, and studies. This does not give us an excuse for mediocrity, but a rule to see reality. Do what you can and leave the rest to the Lord. The child in the multiplication of the bread account in the Gospel did not feed the whole throng of people with his lunch bag, but he put in Jesus' hands everything he had (Luke 9: 10-17). One child, five loaves of bread and two fish... 'What is this for a multitude?' asked the disciples. Jesus multiplies our efforts if we do everything in His name and for His glory. Will you give your five loaves and two fish?

Maybe we know that we cannot reach everyone, but maybe our concern has to do with the resistance we find at the moment of sharing our faith. Some people seem to be as impenetrable as the Great Wall of China, impossible to cross. It is impossible for them to admit their need for God- they are too proud. This is a source of discouragement. It is like facing Goliath in battle and we think "this person is too far away from Jesus! What can I do? I'm not St. Francis of Assisi, neither am I St. Ignatius of Loyola." We may broach the topic of religion, but won't lay all our cards on the table for fear of being rejected. Maybe we tried hard, and after failure we just gave up.

Then is when the second part of the missionary prayer must become real. 'Faith lets us understand that you are at our side in this task'. Jesus promised it, 'I will be with you till the end of time' (Mt 28:). Do you believe this?

We must be honest and sincere with ourselves first. God is not sending us to docile lambs that will at the first whisper of our mouths surrender to our directives. The lost sheep in the Gospel demanded that the shepherd go all the way to where she was and carry it back on his shoulders. St. Paul, St. Augustine and St. Francis Xavier could all be considered lost sheep before their conversion to Christ. They all became great apostles, heroic evangelizers, and zealous preachers. They were not born with angels' wings attached to their backs; the Lord had to break their resistances. They traveled three very different paths on their way to the Lord. To Paul, the Lord himself had to meet him on the way to Damascus. Augustine was brought back by the preaching of St. Ambrose and the prayers of his mother, who spent many hours on her knees praying for him. Francis Xavier was the roommate of St. Ignatius at the University in Paris, and was influenced by his faith.

This is the work of missionaries: they are sent to where the need is great, where there are difficulties, and where people do not know Jesus. As Fragua members we have a missionary spirituality. We are all missionaries, because we understand that our times are mission times, and that our relationship with the world is as an urgent messenger. In every circumstance we must irradiate Jesus. We become holier by helping people grow in holiness. We will not build an arc as Noah did to shut the door and prevent people from coming in. We will not form a closed community. We need to open the doors of the Church for everyone to come in. Hope leads us as we carry the Good News.

Maybe you are thinking ‘all right, I agree, but I still don’t have that missionary passion. I still get a good night’s sleep even if my friends are away from the Lord’. I’d like to counter this mentality and ask you, ‘why?’

Apostolate is a matter of faith:

We may not be like St. Francis who felt pain when he saw his fellow men away from God. But it is true that the closer we grow to Jesus the more we care for what he cares about, and the more we are concerned with what he is concerned with. The apostolate is the thermometer of our faith. The greater my faith, the more I want to share it. When someone starts to put aside God’s concerns (prayers, Mass, etc) the fire within is reduced to ashes, the holy craziness is dissolved, we begin to blend in with the rest of the pot, and the apostolic adventure turns to nothing,

The work of the apostolate is not human; it is divine, supernatural- it comes from the Lord. The foundation of being an apostle is finding the Lord yourself. When someone returns from a Fragua he/she talks to everyone about it, he/she has no problem with sharing the experience. Why? What’s the secret? Why so much energy? Some say it is due to the fact that they have strong feelings at the moment. There might be some truth in that, but the reality is that there has been a fresh encounter with Jesus. The freshness of the encounter leads them to spread the Good News.

Faith in Jesus grows through prayer, spiritual retreats, and missionary experiences. When we decide to deepen in our Christian life, Jesus starts speaking to us in many different ways. This is when the desire arises to bring others to the knowledge of Christ. The true poet has something to say, to transmit. The preacher of the papal household says in one of his books, “In view of the new wave of evangelization, there exists the necessity not only for specialists in Christology, but also for people in love with Christ, able to talk about him and who are ready to prepare the way for Jesus, humbly and ardently, as John the Baptist did for the first time.”¹ We need poets, men and women, willing to speak up because they have something very important to say. We need poets who are willing to become heralds of God, to prepare the way, to pave the road for the King.

One by one

It is surprising to see the first Christian communities in the first centuries, how they started off the evangelization process. They had so little and accomplished so much. How was that possible? Jesus gives us a clue in the Gospels when he talks about the mustard seed turning into a big bush where the birds of the air find rest (Mt13: 31). This is not mere poetry... The curiosity of John (John 1: 35-51) had repercussions; it brought Andrew, his brother James, and then Peter, Philip and Nathanael - all in a matter of hours. It was a chain reaction, as in chemistry (a sequence of reactions where a reactive product or by-product causes additional reactions to take place). After John five more Apostles came. Why? Because the Gospel message spreads through the mysterious power of grace. St. Paul says that the Gospel is the Power of God. (Letter, chapter)

I must not lose my peace of mind if I don’t bring thirteen people closer to God today. I need only to bring one; in four months someone else, and then another one. Then you’ll have three friends sharing your love for God. Then, if you help them and assist them as they grow and persevere, they will become apostles of apostles. Next year there will be four of you, and you won’t be alone. If each one of them decides to bring

¹ Raniero Cantalamessa, “The Holy One of God”, pg 6.

three friends to the Lord at the end of the next year there would be fifteen of you- and this in just two years! That's what I call evangelical multiplication. This is, of course, not mathematics, and we should not be counting how many people we bring to Jesus (He never liked that), but what we must be sure of is that it will make Him happy if every year I bring three more to his feet.

Whose job is it?

Some people have what is called false modesty. These individuals may think it is a sign of pride to say they are going to bring people to Christ. This is not the case! Jesus is the one who makes the seed grow, but He counts on your help, on using you as an instrument. It is good to plan; in matters of faith you should not leave everything to spontaneity. How great would it be to bring two or three friends to Jesus? You don't have to publicize your holy longings, but you and He know. You are going to work, and the rest is up to Him. Of course this is not so you could earn a trophy for each convert you made; you only have the desire to spread the knowledge of Jesus, that they may enjoy His presence.

We must be "shrewd as serpents", wise and cunning to notice that this thought of false modesty does not originate in God. Instead we need to say to the tempter who suggests such thoughts, "I neither began this work for you, nor I would give it up for you". And if he suggests that all these desires are going to our heads, tell him that his desires of grandeur were the ones that led him to disaster. We do not dream of our own glory and renown, but only want to give Jesus glory.

To whom should we go?

It is of primary importance to know to whom we are going to announce the Good News. Even though it might seem like Jesus was excluding some people, he was certain of what he was doing and who the recipients of his ministry were. "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). And St. Paul, too, had but one main goal in his apostolic enterprise: to gain for Christ the pagans, the Gentiles who had never heard about Jesus. That was a challenging goal in those days, but it became a reality with the help of the Holy Spirit.

We go to those who do know Jesus, but from hearsay. Maybe they go to church on Sunday, maybe once every now and then, but they have lost the sense of their faith. Many times these people are busy with many activities. They have initiative to start many projects; they have passion for what they do, but they are asleep in matters of faith. These people are all around us, so this is not a minor issue. It is not about going to deserted places to mission, nor does it always require stopping people in the streets to announce Jesus to them. It is a matter of 'thinking evangelically, and acting locally'. When we think of mission, evangelization, we tend to think of going to a poor, remote and unknown corner of the globe; but in fact Jesus wants us to look at our present surroundings.

The best way to ensure that the seed of the Gospel is being sown properly is to prepare the terrain. And the soil is prepared with friendship and confidence. Only in the context of friendship can we seriously ask someone to reconsider the meaning of his or her existence. In this context I can open myself up and explain the process of questioning and finding faith in my life- how I came to know Jesus. Then, after seeing my sincerity in sharing, my friend can open up. The new evangelization is a very delicate task, and requires us to reach others' hearts. John Henry Newman's famous phrase can help us here, 'Heart speaks to heart' (Cor ad cor loquitur). It is not enough for the other person to see a Catholic movie, listen to a homily, or read something I lend to him/her. It is most likely that they will have no interest in doing any of the above, or maybe will have their own ideas and will not be interested in 'religion'. Faith is made personal when you can sit down with your friend and talk honestly and in-depth.

In these one-on-one conversations, it is most often ourselves who are scared. We are afraid of being judged, afraid due to our self-consciousness; but we need to push ourselves. Once we talk with our friends about matters of faith we see fruits almost immediately. It's a matter of trust, and don't forget that "Cor ad cor loquitur". *****

Help them see the good that lies in them

How are we supposed to start this 'holy' conversation? First you should not tell the other person that you'd like to have a holy conversation; that would not do it. Invite them to grab lunch or go for coffee, and tell them you'd like to talk for a while. Ask them about their faith life and convey to them that you want to be sincere and honest. A conversation may go something like: 'I have known you for many years and I know how passionate you are in what you do. I believe that passion can be put into something everlasting. There's something in store for you and you need to discover it. Jesus can help you be more fulfilled than you have ever imagined before. He who gave you the talents you have will multiply them in you if you do not squander them.' Any words will do; it is a matter of being brave enough to start the conversation and to show that it is not a burden to follow Jesus. Some may feel that following Christ is a mistake, a social construction or myth to help them behave morally. Rather, Christ makes you a better person and can help you reach unexpected heights.

Miguel de Unamuno said, "Each friendship makes us better and enriches us, not so much for what they give us but for what we learn about ourselves when we are in that relationship. Each one of us has reserves and treasures rendered useless, angles of the soul that are asleep. And we can even die without having discovered them due to the lack of someone to reveal them to us. We all have unsatisfied feelings and ideals which can become true, only if someone comes to raise them up. Every human being has a Lazarus inside which needs Christ to be reawakened. Poor, those Lazaruses who have reached the end of their days without having found a Christ who could tell them: Rise!" These words of the Spanish writer are eloquent. The best treasure we have is in us and can be reawakened and enhanced with the grace of God- they just need us to help them see.

Of course you could begin by pointing out their defects, telling them (as some preachers do on TV) that they are going to hell, what terrible sinners they are, or try to make them accept Jesus by any other sort of non-invitational methodology. But this will not work. Most people do not come to Jesus out of fear of hell, but by the catching force of the beauty you show in Jesus Christ. It is beauty that attracts and powerfully invites them to draw closer to Him. This does not necessarily mean starting with the positive just to make people feel good. It is a matter of showing them what's here for them, what's so good about following Jesus, and also about deconstructing the prejudices that some people have against the faith and the way Catholics live.

Expectations

In the work of apostolate there are three questionings and desires that intertwine with one other. None of them are vain, though sometimes they do not coincide. 1) What do I expect from the person that I want to draw closer to God? 2) What does Jesus expect from him or her? 3) What does that person expect from me and from Jesus?

There was a person who told me some time ago with a tone of distrust in his voice, 'I think you're trying to get me to believe in Jesus.' Seeing that he was so concerned about that I just answered, 'Of course, I

want the best for you, and I understand that the best is hidden in Christ.” I think it was a good move to be sincere, to let him know that indeed I desired him to return to the Church. Sometimes people feel like we want to “convert them” as if we were trying to win a prize or as if we would get some sort of coupon reward at Church for bringing a friend. It is good to be sincere and clear instead of secretive and mysterious because the latter makes people think I’m in a sect rather than a member of a true religion.

We know well that Jesus has expectations of everybody. We may call this His plan for our lives. He has a plan, most certainly, but we always insist on frustrating it. Let’s look at Jesus himself in the Gospels. Luke (19:41) tells us that on seeing Jerusalem from afar Jesus wept because the city of God was unconverted, and rebellious; it degenerated the covenant, forgot the Lord of armies and the God of hosts. He cried because they refused to be gathered under the shadow of his wings, because they didn’t allow God to be God. I invite you to open your Bible and look at the passage and discover what makes Jesus weep- what causes his grief. I invite you to appropriate his feelings (Phil 2: XXX) and to transform your intentions and motivations into His. Oh, that you might come to be like St. Monica who cried and wept for her son! She cried and begged, and in returned she deserved to be the mother of St. Augustine, the one converted by many prayers and tears.

Apart from what you want and what Jesus wants, there is what the person expects from you and from God. Some people do not expect much from God, or so they say. They might feel that they are doing okay in life; that they don’t need to bother with complicated religious questions. Others may be interested, but might say they are ‘spiritual’ and not necessarily ‘religious’. Still others might be opposed to religion because, they say, it is the cause of division and war. Many, many positions will be found out there, and each person has his or her own pretexts, difficulties, and expectations about the faith. It is important to be aware of where the other person is in terms of faith, in order to “diagnose” his faith. Why? Because that’s what a good physician does first; to know clearly the problem is half of the solution. You’ve got to be ready to be in the other person’s shoes, to know what’s going on within him/her, and so be ready to apply the right medicine. Of course, there’s no recipe on how to do this, it is a matter of prudence and it depends on your ability to read into people’s hearts.

The First Step: Pray with Confidence

We know that when we pray we must believe unwaveringly (James XXX). Do we believe this, do we practice this? The Gospel, once again, has a beautiful story of a paralytic who was carried to Jesus by his friends. When these unknown friends reach the house that Jesus was, they found it impossible to even see Jesus from a distance because of the crowd. ‘What now?’ they probably asked one another. In their love for their friend and with much creativity and effort they took the paralytic up the roof. They opened a hole in the ceiling (they did not have concrete roofs in first century Palestine) and brought the infirm down with ropes. They knew they had to bring their friend to see the Master face to face, and so they did (Luke 5: 18-26). This is also our responsibility- to bring people into Jesus’ presence. How? Simply by means of our prayer. Yes, before talking with people about God we need to talk with God about people. A simple prayer will suffice, ‘Jesus, you know J and K; you know them better than me. You know how much they need you; I don’t know how to bring them to you. They have this and that difficulty in coming back to you, they don’t really know you. Let me know what to do and give them your grace.’ Intercessory prayer shatters God’s heart, because it only can come from someone who can see beyond his or her own needs and petty problems. In fact, to pray like this is to exercise the virtue of charity. There are four steps to it:

1. Be in the presence of God.

2. Talk to him about your friend, sibling, or relative. Tell Him all that you can about him/her, as if you were explaining a disease to a physician.
3. Make an act of faith in the power of Jesus. (Don't forget that Jesus cured that paralytic seeing the faith of his friends). If you Lord made the Israelites cross through the Red Sea, why wouldn't you do this, which is much simpler?
4. Offer yourself as an instrument in His hands to cooperate with His grace.

Second step: Testimony

I would like to point out three simple traits, maybe more human than supernatural, to use when we bear witness: be fully human, passionate, and joyful.

Many people believe that Christians have shut the door to whatever is good and human nature. They may have the misconception that we like gloom and doom and are unable to see the beauty of this world. For this reason many think that everything enjoyable is 'off limits' for Christians. We need to show them that to believe is to live life to the fullest, that Christ does not take anything away from us, but gives us much more than we ever dreamed of. Yes, we really can say 'La vita e bella' more than anyone else because it's brightened with God's brightness. I have found people who can't believe I play soccer and I love going to Church, for some reason they have a prejudice of what a Catholic looks like. And so it's my delight to crash those misconceptions, and show them quite simply and frankly that I live a better life than they do. Not proudly, not in their faces, but with decision, showing them that Christ is not the bad guy of the movie who wants to deprive us of what is good. Christ shows to man who he/she must become.

Passion. The world bows to passionate people. The passion comes only when you have a great mission to fulfill in your life, something worth while fighting for. Silvio Rodriguez, a Cuban singer, wrote "Cowardice is a matter of human beings not of lovers, coward loves are not neither loves nor stories, they stay where they are; not even memory can rescue them or the best orator conjugate". Life has to be lived with passion, with gumption. Every person in history that has left a mark has had a great passion for something. The obstacles are many and we need to desire not as if we were just wishing something to happen, but as a mother desires to give birth and is ready to give her life for the child. To be passionate is not to be bizarre, it is to have a reason to live and die; a reason to fight, a reason to grow, a reason to keep trying after many defeats. I still remember crossing the Altas Cumbres (The High Summits) from Villa Dolores to Cordoba in Argentina on a mini-bus. There was no one except the driver and I so I thought it would be good to exchange some words before taking a nap. I didn't know what to say so I told him our truck was having engine problems. Soon enough I realized I had committed an enormous mistake. He started talking about engines so fast that I couldn't tell when he was breathing. Towards the end of the trip he finally said "You don't get it, do you? Engines are alive, ALIVE!" Now you can imagine the situation, but one thing I was sure of, that person had a passion- not for the highest good on earth maybe, but a passion still. How I wish many of us could speak with the same conviction, with the same certainty, the same boldness about our faith in Jesus.

Joy. This is manifested in an optimistic spirit, who always moves forward. It is a bit of good humor, good temperament, and the ability to cheer someone else. This has deep spiritual roots, the one who is joyful is so because he/she has a reason to be joyful, and there is a motivation behind that joy. It is not just something spontaneous but a service we can bring to others, to the ones who are unable to smile, those who despair, the depressed, the trouble minded; there are many who need our friendship and joy.

Third step: the message

Those who have been on missions know full well that when someone has been away from the Church for a long time, that person needs a straightforward presentation of Christ. The message is simple: Jesus came from heaven and became one of us for our redemption, died for our sins, rose from the dead, and now lives forever! You need to tell them what the Lord has done in your life. Some people try to pretend they were very wicked or filthy people, to show more of a contrast between their lives before and after Christ; this is not necessary. There is still a BC and an AD in our lives and this is what counts; the difference is qualitative. Maybe our life was not that of a barbarian but we were quite unenthusiastic; we had short vision, or were concerned with our own petty problems. Maybe we were caught up in the nitty-gritty of a small world, unable to look up into the heights of heaven.

To wrap it up:

The world is in need of passionate people willing to bring Jesus into the public arena again. We need to come down from the mountain top like Moses with a radiant countenance to communicate what we have heard. We need to prepare this missionary month with much prayer and sacrifice, with a tireless love for God and his Kingdom.

There is joy reserved for those who work in the Lord's vineyard, an inexpressible joy. Do you remember the scene where Paul, in the midst of unusual circumstances, announces the faith to the jailer? This man brings Paul to his house and his whole family is baptized before dawn. They end up celebrating and "rejoiced at having come to faith in God" (Hech.16:30-34). "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings, announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation, and saying to Zion 'Your God is King!'"(Isaiah 52: 7).

Persistence! We need to lower again the nets for a catch, though we have been fishing all night (Luke 5: 4-11). Peter said on that occasion by the lake, "We are going to do it because you say so"; not for any other reason. Then the miracle occurred. Never give up in the task of evangelization. Resist, surrender is futile!