

## 4th Sunday of Easter

I lost count, but at the Easter Vigil this year I think I baptized 22 people. This shows growth for our parish, both because of new families moving into our area, and because of parents sharing faith with their children. All of us who are baptized rejoice in being the Body of Christ, and we tell others about the Body of Christ.

When Catholics hear the word “evangelization”, many of us think of it as something that other Christians do. We don’t go door to door to tell people about church; we don’t put flyers on the windshields of parked cars. Yet each of us is called to tell the gospel to others and invite them to meet Jesus Christ.

When I meet new people and learn about their lives, one of the questions I ask is not just where they work or live or spend their free time, but, “Do you have a church?” If they say no, I invite them to try St. Anthony’s. Many of you have done the same. When you share with others the experiences you’ve enjoyed here, you spread the gospel, and you invite others to follow Christ the Good Shepherd.

Parents have a special opportunity to share their faith with their children. The Code of Canon Law says that “Parents are obliged to take care that infants are baptized in the first few weeks; as soon as possible after the birth, or even before it, they are to go to the pastor and to request the sacrament for their child and to be prepared properly for it. An infant in danger of death is to be baptized without delay” (867 §1 and 2). We offer baptism preparation for parents in English and in Spanish, and we urge them not to delay the baptism of children, so that these children may enjoy the grace of the sacrament throughout their lives, even in the early years of their formation.

As children age, some of them grow stronger in faith, but some of them resist it. This is hard on parents, but parents are not completely responsible for the choices a child makes after sharing their faith. Parents are simply responsible to invite children to faith.

In today’s first reading, Peter preaches the message of Jesus Christ and invites his listeners to be baptized. This speech continues the one we heard in last week’s first reading. It took place on the Day of Pentecost, immediately after the apostles received the gift of the Holy Spirit. They go out into the square with new confidence and proclaim Christ crucified, the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter’s speech was so powerful that 3000 people came forward for baptism that day. He probably lost count too.

When we were baptized and confirmed we received the same gifts of the Holy Spirit given to the apostles. It doesn’t always feel that way. At times we feel that even people we love do not listen to our testimony of Christ and the Church. At times we lack the courage to speak up for what is right. At times we doubt that God can forgive our sins. These are human feelings, and they demonstrate how desperately we need to hear the gospel again and again. Christ is risen. He has sent the Holy Spirit. The Spirit dwells within us to help us in our strife, to increase our faith, and to share it with our neighbor. We already have the gifts we need - because we are baptized.

**SUNDAY, MAY 7, 2017**