

# Jesus skillfully 'markets' love

## THE GOOD NEWS

GOD'S WORD IN EVERYDAY LIVING

By Father Paul Turner



**W**HEN IBM took over Lotus last month, *Newsweek* reported that one big factor was Notes. Notes is a way of linking several computers to the same active databank. The report speculated that IBM would improve sales for Lotus. Notes offers great potential, better than most people realize. It has prospered by word of mouth, but Lotus has not marketed it as well as IBM can.

It's not enough to have a good product. You also need the means to market it. Conversely, if you're simply good at spreading the word, you ought to have a decent product. Good business demands both.

The passages we hear from chapter 10 of Luke this month show us that the reign of God offers both aspects of good business: effective marketing (Lk 10:1-12, 17-20), and a good product (Lk 10:25-37).

Luke devotes most of this chapter to the mission of the seventy, the marketing of Jesus' message. Jesus appoints disciples who precede him in pairs to every town he plans to visit. This advance team solemnly prepares the way for Jesus. On returning, the disciples joyously acclaim their amazing results. "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" When your competitors promote your product, you've got a successful business trip.

**W**HAT MADE it work? Surely Jesus prepared them well. "Eat and drink what they provide," he suggests. If they followed this instruction in Gentile territory, the disciples broke traditional laws of fast and abstinence for the sake of the Gospel. "Travel light," Jesus says. Show by your actions, your demeanor, and your few possessions that nothing else matters but the message you bring. People take notice when you adjust your life to fit your beliefs.

The number of disciples also proved effective. Seventy must have seemed like a small army. Working in pairs, the disciples gave evidence that Christianity means community. Seventy was the number of elders Moses appointed as his assistants (Numbers 11:16-25). Seventy was the number of nations

that sprang from the loins of Noah (Genesis 10). Seventy Israelites entered Egypt (Genesis 46:27 and Exodus 1:5). And seventy were the sons of Gideon (Judges 8:30). You think you have mouths to feed! Seventy indicates a fullness, and perhaps the beginning of the mission to all the nations of the world, which Luke will describe at Pentecost in Acts of the Apostles.

A catchy slogan introduced the product, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." The cost? Love.

Love works well in marketing. We buy lots of products because of the manufacturer's promise that our relationship with them will bring fulfillment. Cars, soft drinks, even deodorants promise a more lasting commitment than many of us expect from people.

Jesus, however, demands the greatest love of all -- love of God and love of neighbor. When the other Gospels tell this story (Matthew 22:35-40 and Mark 12:28-34), the conversation focuses on the greatest commandment, and climaxes when Jesus teaches the second. In Luke's version, the discussion turns on eternal life, and the questioner is a lawyer, a profession the evangelists malign almost as much as today's satirists. This lawyer specialized in the law of Moses. He resembles a canon lawyer, not a civic one. In Luke, Jesus turns the question back, and the lawyer himself gives the correct answer. The two of them do not compete; rather, Jesus invites the seeker into deeper union.

**T**HEN THE LAWYER asks a further question, "Who is my neighbor?" This permits Jesus to tell one of the greatest stories in the Gospels -- the good Samaritan.

A traveler falls to robbers. Left half dead, he is ignored by a priest and a Levite. The hero who saves him is a Samaritan, one of the bad guys in the Gospels. Uneasy as neighbors, Samaritans and Jews practiced religion so differently, that the chosen people regarded their distant cousins as heretics. Social outcasts, ritually unclean, Samaritans were quite the opposite of the lawyer, the priest and the Levite.

Although we lionize the Samaritan, we can certainly understand the choice of the priest and the Levite. In similar settings we too have to choose between immediate and remote help, between the emergency and the possibility of danger threatening our other responsibilities.

Such a risky product requires the best of marketing skills. Yet something must be working. Christianity has never lost its appeal.

Father Paul Turner is pastor of St. John Francis Regis Parish, Kansas City. □

## Daily Scripture Readings

### Fourteenth Sunday

#### In Ordinary Time

Sunday, July 9

Isaiah 66:10-14c

Psalms 66:1-7, 16, 20

Galatians 6:14-18

Luke 10:1-12, 17-20

### Monday, July 10

Genesis 28:10-22a

Psalms 91:1-4, 14-15

Matthew 9:18-26

### Tuesday, July 11

Genesis 32:23-33

Psalms 17:1-3, 6-8, 15

Matthew 9:32-38

### Wednesday, July 12

Genesis 41:55-57; 42:5-7a, 17-24a

Psalms 33:2-3, 10-11, 18-19

Matthew 10:1-7

### Thursday, July 13

Genesis 44:18-21, 23b-29;

45:1-5

Psalms 105:16-21

Matthew 10:7-15

### Friday, July 14

Genesis 46:1-7, 28-30

Psalms 37:3-4, 18-19

Matthew 10:16-23

### Saturday, July 15

Genesis 49:29-32; 50:15-26a

Psalms 105:1-4, 6-7

Matthew 10:24-33

### Fifteenth Sunday

In Ordinary Time

Sunday, July 16

Deuteronomy 30:10-14

Psalms 69:14, 17, 30-31,

33-34, 36-37

Colossians 1:15-20

Luke 10:25-37

### Monday, July 17

Exodus 1:8-14, 22

Psalms 124:1-5

Matthew 10:34-11:1

### Tuesday, July 18

Exodus 2:1-15a

Psalms 69:3, 14, 30-31, 33-34

Matthew 11:20-24

### Wednesday, July 19

Exodus 3:1-6, 9-12

Psalms 103:1-4, 6-7

Matthew 11:25-27

### Thursday, July 20

Exodus 3:13-20

Psalms 105:1, 5, 8-9, 24-27

Matthew 11:28-30

### Friday, July 21

Exodus 11:10-12:14

Psalms 116:12-13, 15-18

Matthew 12:1-8

### Saturday, July 22

Song of Solomon 3:1-4a

Psalms 63:2-6, 8-9

John 20:1-2, 11-18

### Sixteenth Sunday

In Ordinary Time

Sunday, July 23

Genesis 18:1-10a

Psalms 15:2-5

Colossians 1:24-28

Luke 10:38-42