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✠ Most Rev. Thomas Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
August 22, 2006

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2 THE CHURCH Is Catholic

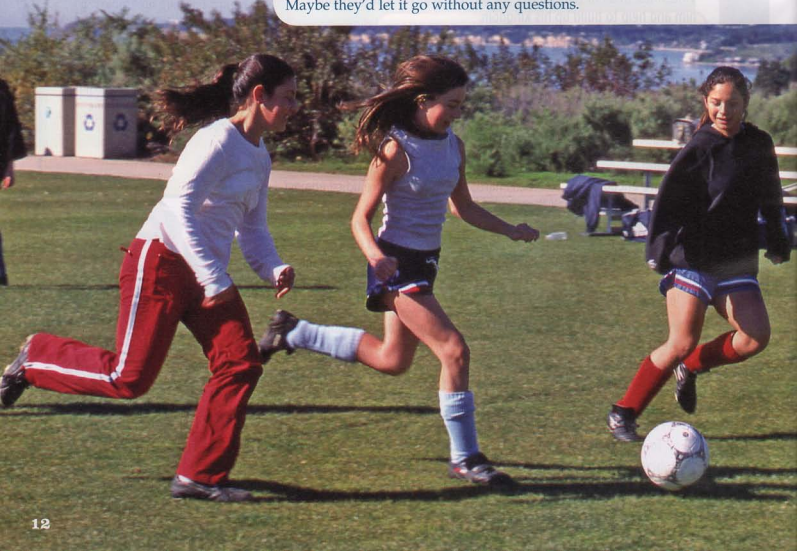
WHAT'S the ISSUE?

Why can't I just keep my religious beliefs private?

Sometimes I'm really uncomfortable telling somebody what I believe about God and the Church.

"Great game, Carly!" bellowed Mike. "You're going to the end-of-the-season party tonight, aren't you?"

It seemed like the whole soccer team was waiting for Carly's answer. "I can't," she mumbled. All week Carly had dreaded saying this to her friends. It's not that she minded that much, but she didn't want to hear all their arguments and comments. Maybe they'd let it go without any questions.



SCRIPTURE
BELIEVERS
YA2

Right. The questions started flying. "Are you grounded?"
"Are you mad at us?" "Do you have something better to do?"

As a matter of fact, Carly *did* have something better to do.
"I'm serving the 5 o'clock Mass. It's for my Aunt Julia."

"Bummer!" Aaron groaned. "Can't you get out of it?"

"I don't want to get out of it," Carly replied. "It's a way of
praying for my Aunt."

"I don't get it," said Carly's best friend, Annie. "She's already
dead. Why keep saying prayers? And if you have to pray, why
does it have to be today at Mass?"

"Catholics always pray for the dead. Especially at Mass. We
pray for the living, too," Carly explained. "But I really loved
my Aunt and I miss her. I believe my prayers will help her."

Annie didn't respond, but she looked serious as she listened
to her friend.

"Go for it, then," said Mike. "And say a prayer for me!"
he grinned.

"Hey, you need more than a prayer. You need a miracle,"
teased Aaron.

WHAT ABOUT IT?

- ▶ Why was Carly nervous about telling her friends she was missing the party?
- ▶ How do you think her friends felt about what she said?
- ▶ Do you think they understood in the end? Why or why not?

WHAT about YOU?

- ▶ Do you ever talk with your friends about your faith and the way you practice your Catholic faith?
- ▶ Do you find it easy or difficult to talk about your faith with your friends?



Lord, give me the
right words to say.



WHAT does FAITH SAY?

CONNECT

Carly took a risk and was honest with her friends about why serving at the Mass for her Aunt was important to her. Carly shared a part of her faith with her friends, and they were able to learn a little more about what she believed. We are called to share our faith with others and support those who bring the Good News of Jesus to people throughout the world.

BELIEVERS SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS

Am I willing to tell other people about Jesus and his Church?

Sometimes talking about your faith is easy and natural. Sometimes it feels awkward. Sometimes it feels competitive—or preachy. When it comes to talking about your Catholic faith, speak simply and from your heart. When you speak from the heart about what you believe others tend to respect it—whether they get it or not. Talking about God is an important part of being a disciple.

Evangelists

The four authors of the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are called “the Four Evangelists.” They were certainly bearers of the Good News, and that is what it means to be an evangelist.

As someone who was the bearer of Good News, one of the very first evangelists was a woman. Before any of the Gospels were written, she brought an entire town to meet Jesus. She was willing to share what she knew, even though many of the townspeople did not like her very much. She became known as the Woman at the Well, a Samaritan woman Jesus met while he was traveling. (See *John 4:14–26*.) She was a woman with a bad reputation. Jesus knew all about her, and he told her so. He also told her he was the Messiah who could give her life-giving water. An important thing about the Samaritan woman at the well is that she became an evangelist.



▲ *Christ and the Woman at the Well*, by Annibale Carracci (1560–1609)



SCRIPTURE

GO TO THE SOURCE

What did Jesus say to the Samaritan woman? Read **John 4:13–26** to find out.

**SCRIPTURE**

"Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I have ever done.' So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.'"

—John 4:39–42

The Samaritan woman believed what Jesus told her and she told others about him and they came to believe too.

An Urgent Mandate

Jesus sends his disciples out with urgency. He says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16). The Church is the sign of salvation and new life sent by God to all nations, in all times, to bring the saving message of Jesus to everyone. Salvation comes through faith in Christ and his Church, so the Church *must* spread the Gospel everywhere. This is her **missionary mandate**.

Christ did not send only the leaders to spread the Gospel. He sent the whole Church. This means he also sent and continues to send *each of us*. There is no other way for us to truly be disciples of Jesus. He expects us to be evangelists.

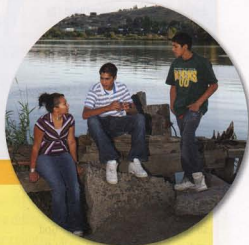
We might doubt our ability to spread the Good News or be afraid of how people will receive us. Jesus reassures us: "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). He has stayed with his Church down through the ages. He is with us now.

Faith Walk

"Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary, use words." This saying is attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi. The way we live our lives is as important as how we share our faith verbally. Your friends, neighbors, teachers, and others won't believe you are a sincere Christian if your actions don't match with what you say.

CHECK THIS OUT!

- ▶ **Spend time figuring out what you know and believe about your Catholic faith.** This will make it easier for you to explain it later.
- ▶ **Pay attention to when you have felt closest to God.** This helps you talk from the heart.
- ▶ **Make mental notes about the questions you still have.** This shows that you still want to grow and that you don't have all the answers.
- ▶ **Don't try to sell, but explain what you believe and why.** This will show your respect for others.
- ▶ **Ask questions of others.** This will help you better understand if your beliefs are different or the same.



How would someone know you are a follower of Jesus? How can you make your faith more visible in your words and actions?

Next Step

MEANT FOR EVERYONE

Why does the Church want to reach everyone in the world?



SCRIPTURE

GO TO THE SOURCE

Read **Acts 1:8–9** to discover how the Apostles would be able to carry out Jesus' command to be his witnesses.

LOOKING BACK

Saint Paul was a great missionary in the early Church who knew how to approach people whose beliefs were different.

In Acts 17, he visited Athens, Greece. The Greeks worshipped many gods. Paul showed respect for their beliefs, so he was able to use them as a starting point. He told the Athenians: "I even discovered an altar inscribed 'To an Unknown God.' What therefore you unknowingly worship, I proclaim to you."

Paul did not set himself above the Greeks. He said: "From one ancestor [God] made all nations inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each of us. For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said" (*Acts 17:26–28*).

The word *catholic* means "universal." When something is universal, it is for everyone. It is total and complete. The word fits the Catholic Church in two ways:

- ▶ The Church proclaims all truths of the faith. In the Church, we have the total message and everything we need for salvation.
- ▶ The Church is for everyone. She is sent out to all people everywhere in every time. When Jesus was ascending to his Father, he told his Apostles, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (*Acts 1:8*).

When we pray the Nicene Creed at Mass we say, "I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church." These four words are called the **marks of the Church**—the four essential or distinguishing characteristics of the Church and her mission. When we say that the Church is "catholic" we mean universal—for the whole world. This line in the Creed means that we believe the Church to be one (one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one Body, enlivened by the Spirit), holy (the Holy God is her author, Christ her head, and the Holy Spirit her means to holiness), catholic (Christ dwells in her and sends her out on a universal mission to all human kind), and apostolic (she is built on the original foundation of the twelve Apostles and continues their work of sharing Jesus' universal mission and ministry).

Universal Doesn't Mean Identical

The Church has to reach out to everyone in the world in order to truly be herself. From the beginning, Jesus wanted the Church to be universal, welcoming of all people and open to everyone. In order for this to happen, we, like the first disciples, have to spread the message.

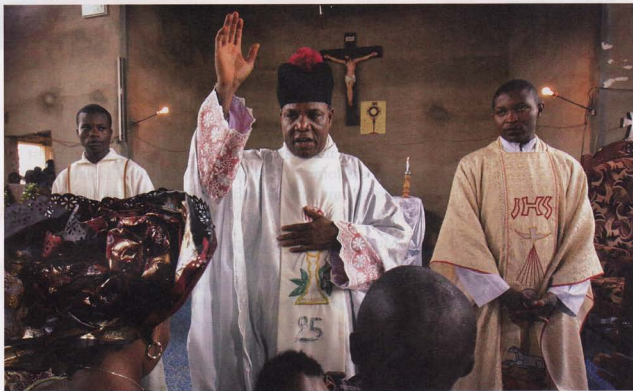
Although the Church strives to be universal and reach everyone in the world, she does not have to look and act the same in every place. The Church takes on different cultures, customs, and appearances in each part of the world where she puts down roots. The rich variety of liturgical traditions and cultural expressions of the faith are part of the Church's great glory.

Everything Needed

The Catholic Church has *everything* needed to be reconciled with God and to be made one with him. The Fathers of Vatican Council II listed all that is needed for salvation:

- ▶ correct and complete instruction in the faith
- ▶ full sacramental life of all seven sacraments
- ▶ ordained ministry that follows in direct succession from the Apostles

These things can only be found completely in the Catholic Church. People who are not members of the Church *can* be saved—but only because of the grace of God present in the Church.



CONNECT YOUR FAITH Have you ever attended Mass at a different parish in your diocese or perhaps while on vacation in the United States or in another country? What did you notice about how the Mass was celebrated? How was it the same as in your parish? How was it different?

Why do you think it is so important for the Church to incorporate the customs and traditions of different cultures?

MISSIONARY CHURCH

How does the Church carry out her missionary mandate?

God, in his great love, wants everyone to know and love him. Everyone who searches for the truth is on the way to salvation, but the whole truth has been given to the Church. For this reason, the Church goes out to those seeking the truth, offering them salvation through faith in Christ. The Church has been missionary from the very beginning and continues to be so today.

Missionary work requires patience; it doesn't succeed overnight! The Church acts like water on a seed—a whole tree doesn't grow instantaneously. She gradually leads people to Christ in these stages: proclamation of the Gospel to people who do not yet believe in Christ, establishment of Christian communities, and the foundation of local churches.

Missionaries enter into "respectful dialogue" with those who do not yet know or accept the Gospel. They respect other traditions and cultures and try to incorporate symbols and traditions of cultures into the way they teach about the Gospel.

Catholic missionaries have been among the greatest world explorers. Missionaries have found isolated tribes, explored unmapped lands, and gained new knowledge about cultures and languages from distant places.

Missionaries help people needing food, shelter, medical care, education, and even protection from war and violence. Catholic missionaries are laypeople, deacons, priests, bishops, and religious brothers and sisters. They work in every country in the world today, and are often in danger. There have been missionaries martyred in every land and time, including now.

Everyone Is Called

You might be called to become a missionary someday. If not, you are *still* called to be part of the Church's missionary work—in fact, all Catholics are! One of the patron saints of missionaries is Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, a nun who never left her convent! Her prayers for the missions contributed so much that she has been recognized as a missionary herself. There are many opportunities to share in the missionary work of the Church with prayers and donations, and even projects in your local area.

CATHOLICS TODAY

There is actually a Pontifical Society (papal organization) just for kids—the Holy Childhood Association (HCA). It was founded in France in 1843 and is still going strong all over the world, including in the United States. Based on the idea of "kids helping kids," the HCA offers lots of information about children all over the world. Kids can get pen pals through the HCA, and you can help raise money for children in need.

They have a really good website. You can check it out by visiting www.osvcurriculum.com and linking to the site.

GO
online



Where in the World

India	Saint Francis Xavier	1542
Canada/Northern United States	Saint Isaac Jogues	1640s
Ireland	Saint Patrick	circa 415
Columbia, South America	Saint Peter Claver	1610
Hawaii	Blessed Damian	1864
Eastern United States	Saint Frances Cabrini	1889
Southwest United States	Saint Katherine Drexel	1894



If you could be a missionary in a distant land, where would you go? What kind of work would you do to help people? Find out about the life of one of the missionaries listed here.



Visit www.osvcurriculum.com to learn more about missionary activities and for links to different missionary sites.

Faith Walk

Many of us don't actually know any missionaries. Perhaps one or two have visited your parish from time to time, but we don't get to see what missionaries do. Missionaries tell others about the life and teachings of Jesus, and share the Catholic faith with those they serve. Missionaries also do everything they can to improve the lives of the local people—things like digging wells for water, helping people grow more crops, or opening hospitals or schools.

The next time you pray, remember to thank God for these dedicated men and women who are serving the Church in very important ways.

How could you learn about and support missionaries in our Church today?

Next Step

CATHOLICS BELIEVE

As members of the Church, we know that we are called to proclaim the Good News of Christ to the world.

- All Church members are called to be evangelists to be bearers of the Good News.

- The Church is universal, going out to the whole world, welcoming people of all cultures and ages.
- Missionaries continue Christ's mission of healing and bring the message of salvation to people who have not yet come to know and believe in Jesus. Each of us is called to share in the missionary work of the Church.

WHAT NOW?

LIVE OUR FAITH

- * Study, know, and live your faith so that you can share it with others.
- * Pray for the grace to be a good example of a Catholic.
- * Practice talking about your faith with Catholic friends so that you can do it more comfortably with people of other faiths when the opportunity arises.
- * Decide how you can share in the missionary work of the Church right now. Choose a mission to pray for. Think of ways you can help that mission financially.

WHAT ABOUT IT?

WHAT About YOU?

Missionaries are so sure that the Catholic faith can help lift people up that they leave their homes to share their faith with others. How far would you go to share your faith? How far would you go to serve others in need?

Missionaries share the Good News of Jesus with those that they meet, and bring others to Christ. List the qualities that a person would need in order to be a good evangelist.



PRAYER

Jesus, our teacher, you send your people to share the Good News. Help us to speak of you in our everyday lives. Teach us to share our faith with friends and those we meet. Strengthen those who serve the Church as missionaries. We pray in communion with all the saints who have come before us and have helped the Church to grow throughout the ages. Amen.

FAITH at HOME

Talk with your family about a way that you can help a missionary community. Perhaps your parish already has a relationship with a mission, or you can find one that you can support. Pray for the missionaries and those they serve. Choose a way to support the mission through a donation of money or goods.



Visit www.osvcurriculum.com for more family and community connections.

Saint Josefina (Josephine) Bakhita

have known then that it was part of God's plan for her. When she grew up, she realized it had been his plan, so that she could come to know him and spread the Good News about God and his Church.

Born in 1868 to a wealthy family in the Darfur region of Sudan, then under the control of Egypt, Josefina was kidnapped and sold into slavery when she was nine years old. Over the next six years, she would be sold and resold to many masters in the slave markets of Khartoum and El Obied. She endured beatings and other forms of abuse, including a painful process of tattooing that she later described in detail in her memoirs. This harsh life must not have seemed like a plan of God at first.

But the Lord helped her escape. In 1883 she was bought by the Italian consul, Callisto Legnani. He brought her to Italy to work as a nanny for a family he knew. Treated kindly, Josefina grew to love the country, and she converted to Christianity five years after her arrival. Within three years, knowing she was destined for a religious life, she was allowed to enter the Institute of Canossian Daughters of Charity in Venice.

For fifty years, she shared her faith generously with those who were less fortunate. Her gentle presence, her warm, amiable voice, and her willingness to help with any task comforted the poor and suffering people who came to the door of the Institute. After a biography about her was published in 1930, she became a sought-after speaker, raising funds to support missions.

Proclaiming the Good News of the Lord and eloquently verbalizing his praises, she said, "Seeing the sun, the moon and the stars, I said to myself, 'Who could be the Master of these beautiful things?' I felt a great desire to see him, to know him, and to pay him homage."

She expressed her joy in the Good News of the Church. "O, Lord," she cried, "if I could fly to my people and tell them of Your Goodness at the top of my voice, oh, how many souls would be won!" A very forgiving woman, she once said that she would "kiss the hands" of those who sold her into slavery because it resulted in her becoming a Christian.

Sister Josefina, who later took the name Sister Moretta, died in 1947 in Italy. She was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 2000 and is considered the patron saint for believers in Sudan.

When Josefina Bakhita was kidnapped and sold into slavery at a very young age, she couldn't



Global Data

- At nearly one million square miles, Sudan is the largest nation in the area on the African continent.
- Sudan is about 70 percent Muslim, 25 percent native beliefs, and roughly 5 percent Christian.
- Khartoum, the capital and largest city, is located at the junction of the Blue Nile and White Nile rivers.
- The Darfur region, where Josefina Bakhita was born, is one of the poorest and most disease-ridden areas in the world today.

