

## Fr. Joe Chapter 5 ~ Evangelization In his own words...

On the first days after my appointment, I would go out on a mission, dressed in my Roman collar and black shirt. I would stay around the church, but nobody came. I would go down the street and could feel everybody giving me the cold shoulder. Immediately I realized that this is not the way to do it. From then on, I went in my work clothes. I began by working around the grounds. People began to stop in and talk a little. But I also realized that I was not just there to do manual labor, but to evangelize, to spread the faith.

I decided that every day on my way back to the rectory, I would stop at houses along the way and ask if there were any Catholics there, or ask if there was anyone interested in learning about the Catholic faith. Almost always the answer was an abrupt no. But there were some good results.

One afternoon I stopped at a funeral home. An elderly woman answered the door. When I asked my question, she said that she always wanted to be a Catholic, but she had to be born a Catholic. As a young girl, she used to sit at the window and cry as she saw her friends going to Mass on Sunday. She couldn't go because she was not born a Catholic.

When I explained that there was no such thing, she became very happy and excited. I went back every week for six months and she entered the Church. Later on, her grown son also converted to the faith. Every Sunday morning they were the first ones to arrive to the church for Mass.

Another day I stopped at a small house and a young couple said that they would be interested to learn about our faith. I went there every week for six months. I was beginning to wonder if they were really interested or whether they were taking this seriously or not. In the end, I did baptize them. Then they moved away and settled in Florida. A few years later the wife died. The husband brought her body back and called me to inquire if I would conduct the funeral service. I did not know any relatives from either side of the family, they were all Protestants and they brought their minister along to also take part in the service.

The husband asked me if we could include three songs. These included: *On Top of Old Smokey*, *Good Night, Irene*, and *Beer Barrel Polka*. The minister objected, but I figured this meant something to the man. I said, "It is okay, and we will play the songs in the beginning before we start the service." I did not score many points that day.

Things did not always turn out. One day I was going through a little town and I saw a man sitting in front of an old garage. I asked him whether he'd be interested in Catholic instructions. He said, "As a matter of fact, I would! Come back in the evening and I will be sitting in my apartment upstairs."

That evening after supper I came back and knocked at the door. When he answered, "Come in," I stepped into the room and he was sitting in a chair with two empty chairs in front of him.

He told me to sit down. Soon afterwards a man came in and he was dressed in a nice suit with pamphlets and a Bible sticking out of his pocket. I knew that he was a minister. The man began by saying, "Let us discuss the Holy Trinity. Three persons in one God." The minister began to try to prove that there was no such truth.

After he finished I said, "Philosophically and theologically it is possible that there is an inter-relationship of paternity and son-ship and spiration. As I went on, the minister suddenly got up. He said that he had another appointment and left.

**Chapter 5**  
**Page 2**

I told the man that if really wanted to be instructed in the Catholic faith, I would come back, but don't try to pull this on me again Then I left and I never heard from him again.

By reason of our baptism in Christ, all of us are called to evangelize, to spread the good news. Sometimes we think this is done by preaching on the street corner or knocking on doors with pamphlets and Bibles in our hands, or going to a foreign land. We do it in our families, our neighborhood, our workplace, and shopping centers every day. We simply live our love for God and neighbor with our patience, our forgiveness, and our acceptance of others, our reaching out to help others. This shines as a light in our troubled, darkened world. Others are attracted to the light that they search in darkness for some light in their lives.

This is how Christianity grew. Pagans use to say, "See how they love one another." They wanted to share in the good news. All of us should be aware of how our light shines before others throughout each day.