

One topic we have heard plenty about in the Church in the past few years, a topic that is very important right now, is the New Evangelization. Most of us know that the Year of Faith began last Thursday, but earlier that week also began the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization, which runs until next Sunday, October 28th. One of the most important speakers at this Synod is none other than our council's own Cardinal Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, who serves as the Relator General for the Synod. To open this assembly of bishops, Cardinal Wuerl gave an address to the members of the synod that very clearly explains what the New Evangelization is and what our roles in it should be.

In this address, His Eminence clarifies what the difference is between this New Evangelization and more traditional evangelizations. Evangelization, as most people would understand it involves distant travel in order to spread your faith or by spreading it to those who do not share in your faith yet. The New Evangelization, however, seeks to re-propose the teachings of the "Church to those who no longer find the Church's message engaging."

The situation the world finds itself in, where a New Evangelization is necessary, "is rooted in the upheavals of the 1970's and 80's, decades in which there was manifest poor catechesis or mis-catechesis at so many levels of education...It is as if a tsunami of secular influence has swept across the cultural landscape, taking with it such social markers as marriage, family, the concept of the common good, and objective right and wrong." The growing levels of secularism, materialism, and individualism "has fashioned two generations of Catholics who do not know the Church's foundational prayers...do not sense a value in Mass attendance, fail to receive the sacrament of penance, and have often lost a sense of mystery...as having any real and verifiable meaning." To combat this tragedy, a new method of evangelization must be used to bring people back to the Church.

Cardinal Wuerl says "we are called not just to announce but to adapt our approach so as to attract and to urge an entire generation to find again the uncomplicated, genuine, and tangible treasure of friendship with Jesus." Many can misunderstand this to mean that it is the responsibility of the clergy to go about this work, but it actually extends to all people. "The command to the Twelve to go out and proclaim the Good News is also valid for all Christians, though in a different way."

The New Evangelization has two main elements: new confidence in the faith and a willingness to share it with others. "The New Evangelization begins with each of us taking it upon ourselves to renew once again our understanding of the faith" and how we apply it to our lives today. This aspect goes hand in hand with the Year of Faith, in which we are called to renew our faith. After this renewal, we must be willing to go out and proclaim the Good News. This proclamation must begin with clear theological explanations "of who Christ is, his relationship to the Father, his divinity and humanity, and reality of his death and Resurrection."

Cardinal Wuerl describes four qualities of New Evangelizers: courage, connectedness to the Church, a sense of urgency, and joy. A New Evangelizer is courageous and unafraid of proclaiming their faith in a growingly secular world. They are connected to the Church in that what they proclaim is in solidarity with the Church and the Gospel. They have a sense of urgency because this mission is so important, and we cannot wait to act. They also find great joy in spreading the teachings of the Church,

teachings which carry a message of joy about the life and resurrection of Christ. These are qualities we all should all aspire to with our roles in the New Evangelization.

As this Synod continues, we await the decisions of its members on practical ways in which parishes, organizations, and individuals on any level of society can actively take part in the New Evangelization. During this next week, we all should pray that the Synod is affective in its decisions, and we all must pay attention to the ways we are asked to help. Both in the Knights of Columbus and as individuals, we are called, like the apostles, to spread the news of the Gospel in the New Evangelization.