

Kerygma Evangelization Retreat

Vincent J. Reilly

In today's hectic and busy world, it is often difficult to find time to encounter Jesus or to spend time deepening our relationship with Him. The Kerygma (ker-rig-ma) Evangelization Retreat invites participants to deepen their faith, open their heart, and have a real and personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

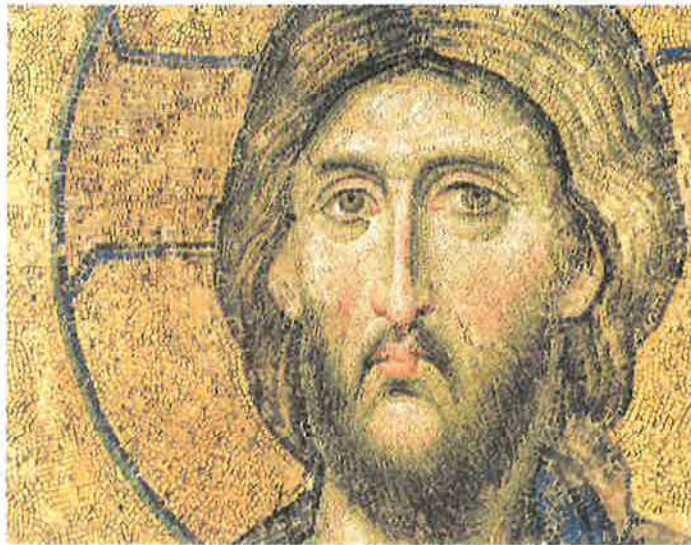
Kerygma, which comes from the Greek word for proclamation, is the core message of the Christian faith and the heart of the Gospel. Pope Francis has repeated many times, "Nothing is more solid, profound, secure, meaningful, and wisdom-filled than the Kerygma. All Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into it" (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, §165). The Kerygma Evangelization Retreat is a way for people to receive this proclamation in a prayerful and Christ-centered way.

The Kerygma Evangelization Retreat is different from other retreats. The retreat calls people to establish an everyday relationship with Jesus according to an authentically catholic spirituality. There is not a call to renew the parish through making a commitment to a new ministry or even a requirement to be on the next retreat time and the retreat does not propose one specific method for spiritual growth, rather it calls the participants to experience a personal relationship with Christ and sustain that in their parish, no matter which one they attend. It encourages participants to move from "knowing about Jesus" to "knowing Jesus" and "going to Church" to "being Church." It invites participants to evangelize in simple ways and to live their lives for Jesus wherever they happen to be in a similar way to the early Christian community. One participant stated, "I thought I had done everything, attended Catholic school, been to other retreats in the past, participated in the Renew program for years, but this retreat caused me to realize how I was just going through the motions; now, I have personal relationship with my Lord."

The retreat is designed so that all family members in a household can participate at the same time. The retreat is appropriate for everyone age 16 and up, no matter how actively they are practicing their faith or their life experience. The proclamation of the retreat is designed in a way that is approachable, warm, welcoming, and leads to dialogue. The retreat is designed to appeal to the free choice of the participant with open invitations made throughout the retreat to experience Christ more fully. The Kerygma Evangelization Retreat's objective

fulfills Bishop Estevez's vision to "articulate with a new language to be more effective in making the Gospel credible and persuasive in a new era" (*So That They May All Be One*, 6).

The Kerygma is the Good News of Jesus Christ that all believers are called to proclaim. This proclamation is enthusiastic and seeks to lead participants to lasting conversion and discipleship through focusing on the three great truths: "God loves you; Christ is your Savior; he is alive" (*Christus Vivit*, §130). This proclamation will call all of us into a deeper participation in the Body of Christ in our personal life, our family life, and our community. The manner of the retreat encourages each participant to be transformed into a missionary disciple



and each Church into a missionary parish, an evangelizing community, welcoming to others. A participant of the retreat affirmed this method, "The process of conversion became dynamic, that through this experience, I received God's mercy and grace and through the power of the Holy Spirit, I was transformed to the fullness of my being."

This transformation is achieved through having an experience of being captivated and totally im-

mersed by the love of Christ. The retreat offers a unique encounter with the person and presence of Jesus, especially in the Eucharist. It invites participants to encounter the sacraments in a refreshing way through engagement in the Christian community. In addition, time for prayer and reflection on Scripture are foundational elements of the retreat. One recent participant stated, "The Kerygma Evangelization retreat was the best religious experience of my life."

The retreat is based on the Kerygma Evangelization Retreat designed by Fr. Alfonso Navarro in Mexico City in 1978, but has been adapted for an English-speaking American audience. It is the centerpiece of Fr. Navarro's Systemic Integral New Evangelization (SINE) process of forming Small Christian Communities in the parish. This does not eliminate all of the good things a parish is already doing, but rather its goal is to integrate all the parish's activities around Jesus' Great Commission. his retreat is offered in 14 different countries, involving more than 600 parishes throughout the world. (Vincent Reilly is the Director of Faith Formation and the leader of Kerygma Retreat team at St. Catherine of Sienna Catholic Church, Orange Park, FL)