

***The Ascension of the Lord***  
***The Seventh Sunday of Easter***  
***Homily ~ June 5, 2011***

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One of the simplest words in the English language is the two-letter word *GO!* We use it to start races: “On your mark, get set, go!” There is not a racer anywhere who hearing those words and hearing the starting pistol says, “What did you say?”

As Jesus prepares to depart from his disciples, Jesus simply says, “*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations.*”

Today for a few brief moments, I suggest we deal with the who, where, how, and why of the *go* word.

The first is *WHO*. Unfortunately, most of us are like the out-of-shape, overweight man who decided to take up tennis. He took lessons from a pro. He read several self-help books, which advised him to the “think positively” and “develop a winning attitude.” A friend asked him how his tennis game was going. With a positive, winning attitude in his voice, the man replied, “When my opponent hits the ball to me, my brain immediately barks a command to my body, ‘Race up to the net, slam a shot to a far corner of the court, then immediately jump back into position and return the next volley to the other far corner of the court.’ And then my body says, ‘Who, me?’”

I’d be willing to bet, if we could go back in time, that the first words out of the mouth of the disciples after Jesus spoke these words were the same, “Who, me?” You have to remember that these words took place before Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. However, the question is still pertinent. “Who, me?” And the answer of course is, “Yes, you!” Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:20 says, “*We are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us.*”

Who, me? Yes, you!

Did you know that all the research about people who join the Church says that 75% to 80% of them were brought into the Church by their friends and personal acquaintances? Only 9% were brought in by pastors, and only 2% brought

in by Sunday school teachers. The power of the laity, the power of friends and friendship, is much more valuable than any number of degrees we could have.

In the book, *The Greatest Salesman Who Ever Was*, Edward Marquart, the author, says the average person knows about 250 people—some more, some less—but about 250 people. That means if each person brought just one person to worship and that person became an active faithful member of this congregation, we would double our Mass attendance. Father Karl Rahner once said that for every new member to Catholicism through RCIA, if they remain faithful to their commitment, in their lifetime that one person will bring ten new members to Christ. We'd have to start up new worship services, new classes, new ministries, possibly begin the plans for a new building program.

When Jesus said, "*Go into all the world*," he was calling each of us to be a missionary as well as an ambassador. Some may answer the call to be an overseas missionary or to one of the emerging churches in our hemisphere. For most, the call to be a missionary is a call into the mission field of our world where we work, live, shop, go to school, the world of people we know and like and who know and like us, the world of our family, the world of our friends. *GO!*

Then, finally, there is the *HOW*? Perhaps you have seen the Staples Office Supply commercials with the Easy Button. Don't we wish we had the Easy Button—knock on someone's door and push the Easy Button?


The *HOW* is really simple. The first thing we do is trust. Trust the Spirit of the Risen Lord. And trust the Holy Spirit. Trust the miracle of God who works in our lives in such a way that our lives are transformed into an invitation to a relationship with God through Jesus. We can't force anyone or make anyone a disciple of Jesus, but we can pray for them. And in that prayer we can ask God to enter their lives in such a way that Jesus becomes real and their relationship grows deep.

Furthermore, we can engage in conversation about their faith and their relationship with God in a non-condemning or non-judgmental way. So we can encourage, we can invite, we can offer counsel, but we leave the hard work up to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The *HOW* is simple: pray, listen, love, live your faith and be ready to *GO* when the start signal comes.

We have to *GO!* That is part of being a disciple. But we're called to remember that we don't go alone. God is with us. Christ is with us through the power of the Holy Spirit. And we need to remember we don't have a communicable disease. We have a communicable cure for sin, loneliness, low self-esteem, lack of purpose, lack of direction and guilt. What we want to do is to infect everyone we meet. Attitudes are not taught, they are caught.

And so, what time is it? It is time to *GO!*

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