

“Spread the Good News” with Saint Andrew

Andrew was an apostle. He was called personally by Jesus to proclaim the “Good News”, to heal with Jesus' power and to share his life and death. Holiness is a gift that includes a call to be concerned about the Kingdom, an outgoing attitude that wants nothing more than to share the riches of Christ with all people. Andrew preached/shared the Good News (*and the bad*) in what is now modern Greece and Turkey. Saint Andrew's feast day is celebrated on November 30th

Preparation:

Bible passages - Matthew 28:16-20, Acts of the Apostles 2:1-41 and 9:3-5 (*see attached*)

Catechist should be prepared to share some “good news” --- this could be any piece of good news, national, international, local or personal to you.

Directions:

How many of you know the game ‘telephone? It's very easy – you have a row of people, and you whisper a phrase into the first person's ear. They whisper it to the person beside them, who passes on what they heard, exactly as they think they heard it. The game is to find out what the phrase has become by the time it gets to the last person in the row. We're going to play it now. Whisper “*I have some good news – repeat something from one of the bible passages*” in the first person's ear, and wait while they pass it down the line. The person on the end speaks out what the phrase has become...

I've had some good news: how many of you could have said those words during the last week?

Would you like to tell us all your good news?

Here's my piece of news...

How do you think I usually share good news? – Yes, it depends on what sort of news it is. What do you do with yours? Do you put it on your Facebook page? Do you send out a group text on your mobile? Do you e-mail people? Shout it from the top of a hill? Hire one of those cars with loudspeakers and drive around?

Do you think sometimes you might choose not to share it at all – like if you won a million dollars in the lottery? Would you tell people, or would you keep that to yourself?

We're going to hear a story now about someone who told his older brother when he had some good news to share, and how that brother went on to become a key player in salvation history!

Game Play:

Have the students sit in 3 circles.

1. **Get started.** One person at a given end of the line will “travel” to whisper and “spread” the “Good News” (something from the attached bible passages ... *the highlighted phrase might work best*) into the ear of the person sitting or standing next to them.
2. **The next person will then “travel” to whisper what they hear to the next person, and so on, until the person at the other end of the line receives the “Good News.”**
3. **Have the last person “proclaim” the “Good News” out loud.** The fun part is when the last person to hear the “good news” “proclaims” it out loud, and the first person says the original “good news” out loud.

John 1:35-42

The First Disciples

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, “Behold, the Lamb of God.” The two disciples* heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come, and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed). Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).

Summary John 1:35 - 42:

There’s a lot happening in this story; two of John the Baptist’s followers saw Jesus and asked him where he was staying. What they really meant was: ‘Teacher, where could we come and listen to you speaking to your followers?’ Jesus replied by saying ‘Come and see’. So they did. They followed Jesus and listened to him and decided that he was the person that the Jews believed God had promised to send to them – the man they called ‘The Messiah’. One of these two followers was called Andrew. Andrew had a brother called Simon, and because Andrew was excited by what Jesus was saying and thought that Jesus was good news, he didn’t want to keep it to himself. He went and found his brother Simon and told him: We have found the Messiah.

Andrew then made Simon come and see Jesus for himself, and when Jesus saw Simon, he said: You are Simon, son of John. You are to be called Cephas [*pronounced Key-fas*]. Cephas is similar to the Aramaic word for rock, and Jesus gave Simon this nickname because Simon was a big man. One of the Greek words for rock is Petros, which in English is the name Peter. Perhaps because of this, Simon later became almost exclusively known as Peter, and that he is now often referred to as Saint Peter. Saint Peter became the first Pope and because of him and other disciples who helped to spread the gospel – a word that means ‘good news’ – the message about Jesus went out into the world. Peter therefore did become ‘the rock on which the Christian church was built’, which is what Jesus predicted Peter would be.

So you see the difference Andrew’s good news made!

Most TV programs, newspapers and other news services don’t usually show much good news. People tend to focus on the bad – and there’s always plenty of it to be found. You may feel that you get put down more than you are praised. Humans just seem to find it easier to be down on each other rather than build each other up. Perhaps that comes from our basic insecurities. You might like to think about that during the rest of the day. But how would the world be, if we were better at spreading good news? If we celebrated more with each other when good things happen? When Andrew and Peter spread their good news, it played a crucial part in the history of the Catholic Christian Church. What might happen if you spread your own good news?

Take a moment now to think about one good thing that has come your way today. And if you can’t think of anything, consider the fact that you have a school to attend, and the potential to learn, while millions of people your age across the world do not.

Now, once you’ve thought of your good news, share it with the people on either side of you.

Matthew 28:16 – 20 The Commissioning of the Disciples

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and **make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit**, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

Summary Matthew 28:16 – 20:

“The Final Commission”, as this Gospel is sometimes called, is given on the mountaintop. Throughout Holy Scripture, it seems the most important and climactic events happen on the mountaintop. WOW! Jesus Christ is again on a mountain doing big things. He had already been “Risen” from the dead, and is about to show all present (and us) the ultimate gift to following on His path: going to God the Father and eternal happiness and joy in heaven. Jesus’ ascension gives a foretaste of the final glorious coming of the Son of Man.

Weren’t there “Twelve” “chosen” Apostles? There are “*eleven*” disciples in this reading, recalling the sad and tragic defection of Judas Iscariot. “*To the mountain to which Jesus ordered them*” is a slight deviation from Jesus’ initial message to the disciples, which was simply to go to Galilee: “*Do not be afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.*” The significance of a “mountain” may be theological rather than geographical meaning. Matthew possibly may be recalling the revelation to Moses and Elijah on Mount Sinai.

Jesus approaches and commissions them to “baptize and teach”, “*to make disciples of all nations.*” Baptizing and teaching the “word” are tasks Jesus had previously prepared His disciples for. Recall that Jesus had sent the twelve apostles to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal. In this “Final Commission”, the “Eleven” are told to go to “*all nations.*” Thus, the mission of Jesus Christ’s earthly ministry is now to be taken to all people by His disciples with their (and our) mission to baptize and to teach. Baptism is the way of entrance into the community of the “Risen one”, the Catholic (universal) Church. Jesus goes on to say exactly HOW to baptize each new disciple: “*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*”. This formula of baptism is perhaps the clearest expression of a “Trinitarian” belief found in the New Testament. ***It designates the effect of baptism -- the union of the person baptized with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.***

Finally, Jesus Christ tells His disciples to go and “*teach them to observe all that I have commanded you*”.

Jesus wants His Apostles to pronounce, and teach the moral teachings of His “universal” (Catholic) Church, preeminently that of the Sermon on the Mount. The commandments of Jesus are the standard of Christian conduct in this world. ***The Mosaic Law is now surpassed in His new covenant with new and expanded commandments***, even though some of the Mosaic commandments have been invested with the authority of Jesus.

The ending of Matthew’s Gospel can be understood as the beginning of the Catholic (universal) Church. Jesus Christ “commissions” His disciples to continue to teach in His name and to bring others into the Church Community of disciples through baptism. The Gospel ends, as it began, -- with the promise that Jesus will continue to be Emmanuel, “*God with us*”, *for all eternity*. Just as Jesus sent His disciples to make disciples, our family, the domestic Catholic Church (the Church Militant), is called to bear witness to the life of discipleship -- living in the way of Jesus. That act of witnessing can take many forms. First and foremost, we should “call” people to discipleship by the example of our love for one another. Our love must extend beyond our family and friends, purposely reaching out to others, and to the world and its creations.

Identify one or more ways in which you live the life of Catholic disciple. Identify one or more ways in which you would like to do a better job bearing witness to your life of discipleship. Choose one of those ways and make it happen. Then choose another, and so on.

Pray for the grace to be witnesses to the world of the life of discipleship.

Acts of the Apostles 2:1 – 12 The Coming of the Spirit

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were.

Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, “Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.” They were all astounded and bewildered, and said to one another, “What does this mean?”

Summary Acts of the Apostles 2:1 – 12:

In the Preface for Pentecost Sunday the priest prays;

*. . . For, bringing your Paschal Mystery to completion,
You bestowed the Holy Spirit today on those you made your adopted children
by uniting them to your Only Begotten Son.*

This same Spirit, as the Church came to birth, opened all peoples to the knowledge of God . . .

The Jewish celebration of Pentecost was a one-day festival, which originally celebrated the harvest or first fruits. In some Jewish traditions prior to time of Jesus, the feast of Pentecost may also have celebrated the giving of the Law at Sinai. It may be that the Christian event of Pentecost is intended to be seen as the giving of a ‘New Law’ by Jesus who is acting as a New Moses. The ‘speaking in different tongues’ may be a reversal of the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel.

The Pentecost narrative can be divided into three parts: The empowerment of the Holy Spirit (2:1-13); Peter’s Pentecost Sermon (2:14-41); and the summary description of the ideal Christian community (2:42-47).

The outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2:1-13 is described by way of analogy. While the disciples are gathered together in the upper room the Spirit manifested with a sound like a mighty wind, and they see tongues like fire divided and came to rest on each of them. All of them were “filled with the Holy Spirit and begin to speak in different tongues.” The sound causes a crowd of pious Jews to take notice and the Spirit inspired proclamation astounded them because “each one heard them speaking in their own language”. Luke cites a very geographically diverse list of pilgrims in Jerusalem who are each able to hear the disciples each in his own language and dialect.

Upon hearing this message a large number of pilgrims are “cut to the heart” and ask Peter and the other apostles, “What are we to do?” Peter’s response is a summary of rites of conversion and initiation in Acts. “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” *As the Catechism reminds us the essential elements of Christian initiation are; “proclamation of the Word, acceptance of the Gospel entailing conversion, profession of faith, Baptism itself, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and admission to Eucharistic communion” (CCC 1229).*

The early Christians empowered to live differently now in the midst of a world awaiting the fullness of redemption. They were empowered to live as a new people, constituted in history, and called to lead the world back to the Father, in and through the Son, because the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity now presided over them and filled them with the very life of the Living and True God. The Holy Spirit was not poured out on the disciples so that they could form movements outside of the Church, rather so that they could become the Church, the communion of the faithful, living in the Church and in midst of the world, on mission.

What can we do to live this kind of transformed Christian life?

Acts of the Apostles 9:1 – 9

Saul's Conversion

Now Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. On his journey, as he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" He said, "Who are you, sir?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do." The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, for they heard the voice but could see no one. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. For three days he was unable to see, and he neither ate nor drank.

Summary Acts of the Apostles 9:1 – 9:

Saul has ravaged the church in Jerusalem, only to find that his persecution and scattering of that church has caused it to rapidly spread. Saul heads northwards to try to head it off at Damascus in southern Syria, and stop it spreading further north.

At this point the terms "Christians" and "Christianity" had not become common. The new religion was known as "the Way", and its followers were called "disciples". Jesus himself provided "The Way" as a name for his church and his faith. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me." Saul's response to the light and the voice acknowledges the one speaking to him as "Lord" but doesn't acknowledge that this Lord is Jesus. Saul, a Pharisee, certainly believed in angels and spirits. He did not believe that Jesus, a man, had risen from the dead and ascended to heaven. Even though the voice said, "Why do you persecute me?" Saul did not recognize that Jesus speaking. Yet Saul was obsessed with persecuting the followers of Jesus. Jesus makes it plain to Saul, that Saul is not hearing an angel. He is hearing Jesus, and Jesus is Lord. Having made that clear, Jesus shows Saul, in the remark about the goads, that he can look deep into Saul's heart. *A goad is a pointed stick used to prod stubborn beasts of burden into movement.* What were the goads that Saul was kicking against? They weren't pangs of conscience, because Saul later said, "I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God until this day". "I truly thought that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus". The goads were the words of truth from the gospel, and the proofs in the form of signs and miracles.

When Saul's companions got up off the ground, they "stood speechless". You might expect them to be all babbling at each other, "*What happened? What on earth was that? Is anybody hurt? Was that lightning? Are you all ok?*" But instead they stood silent, unable or unwilling to say anything. They'd seen a glory brighter than the noonday sun. They were awe-struck and words failed them. Although Saul opened his eyes, he had no sight. The glory of the light had caused some kind of scale to form on his eyes. Saul's companions were not affected in that manner, although they saw the light as Saul did. This blindness was therefore a personal lesson and a sign to Saul from Jesus. It was to impress upon him that he had allowed himself to be blind to Jesus's glory, so now for a time he will be blinded by it. When the eyes of his heart see the truth, then the eyes of his flesh will also see. He is now under Christ's power, and how easily the Lord has humbled him and put an end to his persecutions. Saul and his companions all fell to the ground when the light shone, but his companions stood up before Saul did. Saul heard what Jesus said, but his companions heard only the sound, but did not hear in the sense of comprehending what was said.

On his way to further persecute Christians in Damascus, Paul was suddenly changed from persecutor to disciple and apostle of Christ. He was totally unprepared for this unique experience of seeing the risen Christ and he asserts that this vision gave him the right to be called an Apostle. Since the figure he saw was enveloped in a light of divine glory, He was Lord. And since the figure identified Himself, thus: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting", then only one conclusion could be drawn: Jesus is Lord and the Church is Jesus. Saint Paul of Tarsus was one of the first and greatest Christian thinkers and writers. The same Jesus Christ who rose from the dead and did such a mighty work in Paul wants to work in my life too.

What could Jesus do if I surrendered as Paul did and gave him complete control of my life?