

JESUS' PARTING WORDS

A message from our Youth Minister, Luke Brooks, about Jesus' parting instructions to his disciples and to all of us.

We've all heard of **The Great Commission**. Right before Jesus ascends to heaven, he gives these parting words to his disciples, and in a very real sense, to you and to me. So what is it that Jesus expects us to do, while we await his return? I find what he says interesting. His last words *could* have been simply comforting: “*I am with you always*” or “*you are forgiven and saved-I'll see you in heaven one day.*” But what he gives are *instructions*. Actually, his *speech* contains *four imperatives*: “*Go, make, baptize and teach!*” Jesus says that the Christian life is a life of action, of us *doing* something. For a few minutes let's consider these four imperatives, one at a time, and unpack what they mean.

First, **go!** Whenever you're really excited about something, you've just got to share it. A new restaurant, a movie, job promotion, having a baby, etc. Things that really matter to us, naturally cause us *go* outside of ourselves and share our excitement with others: we can't sit still! That's what Jesus is getting at here. The Christian life must be a life of action and movement, that's why we call it a *walk*, or a *journey*. A good disciple is never sitting still, blasé about their salvation, but naturally moves, *goes out*, to spread the good news. For some of us that might mean literally moving to another country to do mission work, but I think most of us are called to “go out” in



much simpler ways. Your daily environment is a sort of mission field, a place that you are meant to *go excitedly* into.

We see this throughout Scripture. When people have an encounter with God, he always gives them a *mission*. Moses meets God at the burning bush and God sends him on a journey. The prophet Isaiah has an encounter with God and says: “here I am lord, *send* me.” In some cases, people's names literally get changed: Abram becomes *Abraham* (Father of Many), Simon becomes *Peter* (Rock, and I will build my church on you). Saul's name becomes *Paul* when? As soon as he sets sail on a new *mission*. In each case, the new identity that people receive *contains* their mission. As disciples, we all take on new identities, unique missions. We have been asked to see our lives as mission fields, and to *go out* in various ways. *You find out who you really are in your mission.*

Next, we are called to **make**. To make disciples. Now, to “make” is to form, to create. Usually we think of God as being the only maker, or creator. While that’s basically true, God passes on this creative power to us and asks us to *make*. That’s part of what it means to be created as humans in the image of God—to share in some of that creative power. While God is the ultimate maker/creator, he uses us as *instruments* in getting his work done. The best analogy for me is playing the guitar: I’m the one who is ultimately creating the music, but I’m using the guitar as a tool or instrument in getting that music out there. Disciples allow themselves to become instruments in the hands of God, allowing themselves to be used for his purposes.



You have all been given creative powers—to make music, to make products, to make friends, to make food, to make art, whatever—which is incredible! But the most important thing we can *make*, is other followers of Jesus. Does this mean that we all need to quit our jobs and become priests, monks or nuns, or that we have to walk around street-preaching all day? No. It just means that every day, in the back of your mind, you are praying that all of *your actions*

can somehow be directed towards the goal of making disciples—using your specific gifts to draw people into a relationship with God.

Sometimes after I teach, someone will come and thank me for something in the lesson that was completely *not* something I intended to communicate. In the past, I would correct them: “*no, you didn’t understand my point.*” Now I just shut up and thank God that he could use me, in a way that I wasn’t even aware of, as an instrument through which he could reach out to that person.

So, in *your* everyday interactions, from the moment you get up, to the moment you go to sleep, try saying to yourself: “*today I’m going to be God’s instrument that he can use for building his kingdom and making disciples.*”

Next, Jesus calls us to **teach** others. But what if you’re not a theologian? What if you don’t know Hebrew and Greek, and you can’t explain the details of the Catholic faith? Don’t sell yourself short. You don’t have to be an expert, but you *do* have a responsibility to at least know the basics: *Why did God create the world? What is the fall? Why did he send Jesus? Who is Jesus? What is the church?*

There’s nothing more embarrassing than someone asking you why you believe what you believe, and not having any idea how to answer. It’s important to learn from the Church, to study Scripture and to find answers to the tough questions. And do your best not to let fear stop you from sharing about your faith. You might waste some great opportunities!

I hate needles. A couple of years ago I had to have a biopsy done on a small mole on my back. I wish the doctor hadn’t said anything, because I was feeling fine at first. Then she told me: “*you’ll feel a sharp burning sensation for about 10 seconds as the needle goes in.*” Immediately I started feeling faint and the pain was all I could think about. I recall now that while she injecting, she asked me: “*tell me about your parish? Where is it? What’s it like, etc.*” I was so fearful about everything else, I just shut down the conversation. A totally wasted opportunity to share about my faith.

It forces us to ask “how many opportunities were there to teach others about Jesus that were missed because I was worried about not having the right answers, feeling embarrassed, scared of how they’re react, or being too preoccupied with something else.”

Jesus calls his disciples to be courageous and to teach others about him.

Finally, how do we start people off on the discipleship journey? By having them participate in the Trinity. That sounds abstract, but basically, we make disciples by **baptizing** people in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Again, you might think this has nothing to do with you, because you’re not a priest. True, the priest is the one who does the physical baptizing, but it’s far more likely that you’ll be the person to initiate that sacrament, either as a parent, or leading someone older towards baptism. How do you do so? Do you go around yelling at people to be baptized. Of course not. But you might be able to get people excited about baptism when you’ve really grasped what it is.



Consider your own baptism. When you get baptized, it’s as if you become a citizen of a new country. You receive God’s grace in your life, your sins are forgiven and forgotten, you

are united to Christ, you receive the power of the Holy Spirit and because you are now a brother/sister of Christ, you are considered a child of God. In other words, in baptism you are saved because you join a new family—God’s family. *Our instruction to baptize people essentially means to invite people to be part of God’s family.*

A couple of Christmases ago, we were at my in-law’s house in San Diego. At one point in the evening, there were so many people in the house—brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, parents, grandparents, friends, etc. I’m guessing that every person there only knew about half of the other people in the house. We all just assumed that the people we didn’t recognize where somehow related to the “Andersons”. I distinctly remember, this one guy came in with presents under his arm, walked through to the dining room, and asked “*is Ruthie here?*” No one knew Ruthie, but we all said “*oh yeah, she must be around somewhere, make yourself at home*” So he’s walking around, making conversation, having a good time. After about 5 or 10 minutes, he realized that he was in the wrong house, spending his Christmas with a random family!

Do you see my point? In that moment, anyone who walked in was considered part of the family. When we are called to baptize people, we are called to invite everyone to be a part of God’s family. Even more, to have Jesus as their brother, God as their Father, and the irresistible love of the Holy Spirit activated in their lives. That, I think, is discipleship in a nutshell. Our task of *doing, making, teaching* and *baptizing*. If we’re not about those things, then we won’t be the disciples that Christ is calling us to be. So go, make, teach and baptize!

Luke Brooks is the Youth Ministry Director at Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church. Find out more about Youth Ministry at OLL at www.ollparish.com/youth.

Contact Luke for more information at lukeb@ollparish.com

