

The fourth movement of the kerygma

The essence of evangelization is the proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior!

In these past weeks, we have reflected on the fundamental components of the kerygma, the basic “elevator speech” that every Catholic should be able to share with both competence and confidence.

Why are you Catholic? How have you experienced God? What does faith in Jesus accomplish?

In an increasingly secular culture, fewer people grasp the meaning and purpose of Christian faith. How imperative that we be willing to give the reason for our hope.

Responding to love

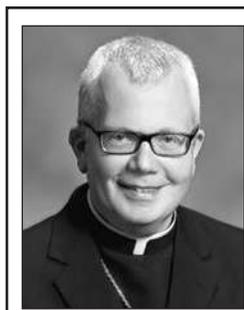
The four movements of the kerygma include the sheer gratuity of creation; God freely making everything from nothing and finding it all good, with man and woman as the crown of the divine plan. Original Sin and every sin thereafter shattered that original perfection, introducing suffering and death into the world.

God comes to our rescue by sending us Jesus Christ, who by His life, ministry, death, and Resurrection saves us from eternal separation from God and the power of death.

The fourth movement is our response to the love, salvation, and redemption so freely offered to us in Christ.

History abounds with stirring examples of individuals who gave their lives to rescue another.

A father drowns in an effort to save



From the Bishop's Desk

† Bishop Donald J. Hying

his son in the water; a soldier is killed as he helps a wounded comrade; a firefighter dies of smoke inhalation saving children in a burning home.

Think of St. Maximilian Kolbe trading places with a stranger condemned to die in Auschwitz.

Love compels us to offer our lives for the sake of another, whether a loved one or even a stranger.

If someone literally traded their life for yours, how would you feel about that person?

How would you honor their memory and their sacrifice? How would you live differently because you were rescued from death?

As miraculous as the raising of Jairus' daughter, the son of the widow of Nain and Lazarus were, Jesus offers each of us a gift far more astonishing, not a rescue from physical death in this life, but the possibility of eternal life forever in the Kingdom of God, perpetual union with the Lord.

When we grasp the enormity of this grace, we feel compelled to respond with a dedicated life of faith, love, service, and discipleship. If God loves me that much, I will give myself



(CNS photo/Clodagh Kilcoyne, Reuters)

to Him in a total and absolute way.

This stunning realization, that Jesus Christ died for me, shatters complacency, ingratitude, and indifference.

The saints could not contemplate a crucifix without weeping.

Conversion is this radical uprooting of the heart.

God wants to invade our lives with His saving mercy and will not rest until we have let Jesus into our inner chamber and surrendered to this amazing grace.

Gratitude and praise

In this context of God's passionate desire for us, the practice of our Catholic faith becomes our response in gratitude and praise for all that the Lord has done and will do.

Religion ceases being some dreary and heavy fulfillment of an obligation and becomes our embrace of the divine romance which beats at the heart of the universe and finds resonance in our own soul.

Sunday Mass, regular Confession, daily prayer, study of the Scriptures, the practice of mortification, service of the poor and needy, the embrace of virtue all become part of our response to the overwhelming truth that, in Jesus Christ, we have become adopted children of the Father, purchased with the Precious Blood of the Son and anointed in the power of the Holy Spirit.

My great hope for every person in the Diocese of Madison is that we continue to experience the overwhelming, shattering, and shocking love of Christ in such a life-changing and definitive way that we become excellent Catholics, fiery disciples, a community on a mission, evangelized ourselves and eager to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with everyone we meet.

This personal and communal trans-

formation is the goal and purpose of our Go Make Disciples initiative, as we begin with our own need to hear the Gospel afresh and drink deeply of the Scriptures and our Tradition.

How timely and appropriate to ponder our discipleship response to the Lord as we celebrate Christmas!

In the wonder of the Word made flesh, human history is forever changed and our eternal destiny opens wide before us.

The tender vulnerability of the Christ Child reveals the extremes of God's mercy, His desire to rescue, restore, and save what was lost, to break the ancient curse of sin and death, and to bring us into the eternal glory of eternity.

Imagine if every Catholic truly experienced and understood the kerygma of the Lord's love and life within and around us!

Once we are past COVID, picture Mass attendance skyrocketing because we all understand the Eucharist as the sacred consummation of our relationship with God.

What if every Catholic in the diocese went to Confession once a month, so that we could experience the transforming fire of God's mercy?

What would happen if everybody prayed every day — really prayed — meditating on the Scriptures and spending time with the Lord?

Our communities, marriages, families, and parishes would be transformed if every single person did these things. Works of mercy and justice would increase exponentially. The divorce rate would drop. Violence and crime would disappear and joy and peace would flourish.

Christ was born in the manger, so we can live, even now, in the beauty and radiance of the new creation.

No need to wait or postpone the good things of Heaven.



Christmas Mass recording

A crew from WISC-TV in Madison recently recorded the Apostolate for Persons with Disabilities-Diocese of Madison's Christmas Day Mass at Holy Name Heights in Madison. Celebrating the Mass was Msgr. Larry Bakke, center, director of the Apostolate. He was assisted by Deacon Jim Hoegemeier, left, who also said some of the parts of the Mass in sign language. The Christmas Day Mass airs on WISC at 6 a.m. and TVW at 7 a.m. on Friday, Dec. 25. (Catholic Herald photo/Kevin Wondrash)