

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Apr 2nd 2016

I'm more of a dog person than a cat person. I don't have any dogs so I live vicariously through others' pet dogs. I feel admiration for those dogs that fearlessly bark at ominous looking strangers who approach their home. I feel delight when I see a dog playing with a new toy ("Oh, look at what Rover found. He's having so much fun with his new toy"). And I feel embarrassed when I see a dog loudly barking at nothing or, worse, at a skunk. Dog watching elicits feelings of admiration, delight and embarrassment, sometimes all at once, sometimes from the same dog. I also feel this same odd mixture of feelings in another context.

Last Sunday, the Church welcomed the newest members of the Catholic Church in the Easter Vigil Mass. Often these new members of the Church possess the so-called "zeal of converts." A 2007 Pew Poll showed that this zeal of converts really exists, with significantly more Catholic converts sharing their faith and views on God on a weekly basis than lifelong Catholics. The Church wisely recognizes this zeal in Canon Law, forbidding neophytes from being ordained priests until they have been grounded in their new identities as Catholics (in other words, don't decide anything rash in your zeal).

As a cradle Catholic, I often find myself feeling admiration, delight and embarrassment when I see the zeal of these new converts. I sometimes admire the zeal of these converts, especially when they share their faith journey with others. I sometimes delight in their enthusiasm as I see them joyfully relate to their new friend Jesus. But I also admit to feeling embarrassed as well. Do they have to be so over-the-top with their zeal and enthusiasm? Can't they simply "shut-up" for one minute and give me some peace and quiet? Don't they understand that no one wants to hear about Jesus right now?

The zeal of the converts challenges me to live a more evangelical life. Am I like the religious leaders who try to silence the enthusiasm of Peter and John? Or do I relate more with Peter and John who refuse to be silenced: "It is impossible for us not to speak about what we have seen and heard." Perhaps I'm like the Eleven who refused to believe the Good News? Or I am like Mary Magdalene who first shared the Good News of Jesus' resurrection?

The Lord has risen. Inspired by the zeal of the newest members of the Church let us "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature."

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