I

Child  
**Object:**An invisible "armful" of love.

Good morning, boys and girls. How are you on this special day? (Let them respond.) Do you know what day this is? (Let them tell you.) Right. This is Father's Day. Today we are especially nice to our fathers because today we want to thank them for all of the wonderful things they do. I have a great gift with me today, boys and girls, which you could give to your dads. Would you like to see it? (Let them respond.) Well, here it is. How do you like it? (Hold your arms out, as if holding a huge package. Let the children respond.) Can't you see this gift? (Let them respond.) Why, this is the best gift of all. Let me tell you about it, then maybe you will be able to see what it is. This gift could make all of the troubles in the world go away! Wouldn't that be wonderful, boys and girls? You see, this gift is sort of catching. You know how you can catch a cold or the measles from someone else? Well, when you give this gift away, it spreads, and other people catch it, too. Can you guess how big this gift is? (Let them guess.) Well, this gift can be as big as you want it to be. It will be at least as big as your heart. Another wonderful thing about this gift is that it will last forever if you want it to. How long do your toys usually last after Christmas Day? (Let them respond.)

Sometimes your Christmas presents don't even make it to the next Christmas. Some of them get broken or lost. Some of them get too small for you. Gifts don't last a very long time, do they boys and girls? Well, this gift - if you treat it right - will last forever! You will never outgrow it. Another strange thing about this gift is that even though you give it away, you still have it! Did you ever give someone a present that you really wanted yourself? (Let them answer.) It is really hard to give away something that you like very much. Well, with this gift, even though you give it away, you still have it! Can anyone see what this gift is? (Let them guess.) This wonderful gift is love. Even though you can't touch it or weigh it or put it in a box, it is very real, isn't it, boys and girls? (Let them respond.) Your parents give you lots of love each day. Because love is catching, you have lots of it now that you can give to other people. Who are some of the people that would like a little bit of your love? (Let them answer.) Those are good people to share your love with, boys and girls. Most of all, on this Father's Day, let's all give a great big bunch of love to our dads so that they will know how much we care about them. Will you do that, boys and girls? Good. So will I. God bless you. Amen.

C.S.S. Publishing Company, ON THE MOVE WITH JESUS, by Wesley T. Runk

Adult

Carl A. Boyle, a sales representative, was driving home when he saw a group of young children selling Kool-Aid on a corner in his neighborhood. They had posted the typical hand-scrawled sign over their stand: “Kool-Aid, 25 cents.”

Carl was intrigued. He pulled over to the curb. A young man approached and asked if he would like strawberry or grape Kool-Aid.

Carl placed his order and handed the boy a dollar. After much deliberation, the children determined he had some change coming and rifled through the cigar box until they finally came up with the correct amount. The boy returned with the change, then stood by the side of the car. He asked if Carl was finished drinking.

“Just about,” said Carl. “Why?”

“That’s the only cup we have,” answered the boy, “and we need it to stay in business.” (1)

It’s difficult to operate a Kool-Aid business if you only have one cup. I want to suggest to you this morning that we sometimes make that mistake in the church.

This morning we are focusing our attention on the evangelistic task of the church. For many persons the word “evangelism” brings to mind a few prominent “cups” from the past. Such cups include, perhaps, a televangelist with slick hair bringing in big bucks via electronic media. Or, if you’re old enough to remember such things, it might be a tent revival on the edge of town where sinners were invited to walk the sawdust trail and offer their lives to Jesus. For those whose memories don’t go back to tent revivals, how about a Billy Graham crusade . . . or a preacher on a street corner . . . or the person handing out tracts in the airport?

In some churches evangelism has traditionally meant a once a year special event or a particular strategy for incorporating newcomers into the life of the church. I want to suggest that, perhaps, by limiting our vision of the evangelistic enterprise to some of these rapidly disappearing cups, we may be stifling Christ’s work on earth and cheating ourselves out of one of the most rewarding endeavors Christ offers us.

The one commandment that Jesus gave to his church besides “love one another” (John 13:34) was the commandment to go out and make disciples of all people (Matthew 28:19). Our failure to take that commandment seriously has resulted in a church that is no longer reaching people with the Good News of Jesus Christ. In fact, a case could be made that we are an enterprise that is rapidly going out of business.

Even worse is the fact that helping a friend or neighbor find new life in Jesus gives our own life a huge spiritual lift. There are few things we can do in life that will make us feel better than having someone say to us, “My life is so much better because of you.” That’s what happens when you invite somebody to be a part of the family of Christ. So I would like to focus for a few moments on Christ’s call to be evangelists--those who introduce their family and friends as well as strangers to Jesus Christ.

**Let’s begin by anchoring our concern for evangelism in Christ’s compassion for the world.** This compassion is the only reason he sends us out to make new disciples. We read in Matthew 9:36, “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

Can you think of a better description of many people today than this: “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd”?

It is a striking simile. Can you not see a flock of sheep milling around in a pen? Frightened and confused, they stumble blindly, bumping helplessly into one another, because they don’t know which way to turn. How like so many of us.

There is a story by Guy de Maupassant titled “The Necklace.” The Necklace is a tale of a young woman named Mathilde who wishes she was rich and also wishes she was accepted in higher social circles. However, her husband is an ordinary French citizen without the resources to fulfill her dreams.

Finally this young woman gets the chance to advance her dreams when her husband gets the two of them invited to an elegant ball. She spends a huge sum of money and buys a beautiful dress. She also borrows a beautiful diamond necklace from a friend, Madame Jeanne Forestier. The stunning necklace draws many compliments from the aristocratic guests at the ball. However, somehow, the worst possible thing happens. Mathilde loses the beautiful necklace.

What is she to do? It was so expensive. Panic stricken, she and her husband borrow thirty-six thousand francs to buy a new necklace so her friend will not find out what she has done. In order to pay back this vast amount of money they are forced to go to such extremes as selling their home, dismissing their servants, working at two jobs, even moving into a slum. After ten years of intense sacrifice, the debt is finally paid off.

One day after the debt is paid Mathilde happens to run into Madame Forestier, the friend from whom she borrowed the necklace. Forestier is shocked by how quickly Mathilde has aged. And Mathilde confesses what had happened--that she had lost the necklace--and what they had been through because of it. Quite shaken, her friend reveals to Mathilde that the diamonds which she had replaced at such great cost had been fake and that the necklace she had lost cost less than 500 francs, a fraction of the cost of the replacement necklace. All those sacrifices had been a tragic mistake.

What a parable of contemporary life! People frantically slaving for values that turn out only to be paste. People chasing after dreams that only end in heartaches. People worshipping idols that can never bring them real happiness.

Jesus had compassion on the crowds. We need to see that when we try to reach out to people in Christ’s name it is not because we are merely seeking to build up our church rolls. It is because we believe Christ can help them put their lives in order. It is because we believe that Christ can help them with their family lives, that he can bring them joy and peace and salvation. Evangelism is always anchored in Christ’s compassion for people. It hurts Christ watching people make a mess of their lives because they have the wrong values. He wants them to know there is a better way.

**Many people today feel unloved and undervalued.**They feel estranged from other people and from God. For example, you’re probably aware that more people are living alone today than ever before. For some that is by choice. But for many others that is because of divorce or the death of their spouse. Loneliness is a major problem in today’s world.

Many young people feel that somehow they don’t fit in. We are made conscious of this every time there is a mass shooting, but it is also reflected in the numbers of people young and old who are becoming drug and alcohol dependent. Many young people are taking their own lives. People today are hurting. Does anyone care? Yes, Christ cares.

There is a beautiful scene in the movie *Dr. Zhivago*. The Comrade General is talking with Tanya, who, unbeknownst to her, is Zhivago’s daughter. He is asking her about one of the traumatic experiences in her childhood, a time when she became separated from her adoptive father, a lawyer named Komarov. He asks her, “How did you come to be lost?”

She replies, “Well, I was just lost.”

He asks again, “No, how did you come to be lost?”

Tanya doesn’t want to say. She says simply, “I was just lost. My father and I were running through the city and it was on fire. The revolution had come and we were trying to escape and I was lost.”

The Comrade General asked more emphatically, “How did you come to be lost?”

She still didn’t want to say. Finally, though, she did say. “We were running through the city and my father let go of my hand and I was lost.” Then she added plaintively, “He let go.” This is what she didn’t want to say.

The Comrade General said, “This is what I’ve been trying to tell you, Tanya. Komarov was not your real father. Zhivago is your real father and I can promise you, Tanya, that if this man had been there, your real father, he would never have let go of your hand.” (2)

That is the difference between a real father and a false father, is it not? A real father would never let go of his daughter’s hand. That is also the difference between a real god and a false one.

Many people link themselves to false gods--power, wealth, physical appearance, the approval of their peers, etc. Sooner or later each of these gods betrays us. They can take us only so far and no farther. Then they, too, let go of our hand. Only one god is sufficient in every circumstance in life and beyond. It is the eternal God--the God who made Himself known in Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus had compassion on the crowds. He, alone, understood the real tragedy of a life of empty values, a life with no direction, a life linked to false gods. He “had compassion for them,” Matthew tells us, “because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

**And this brings us to why evangelism, seeking to help people know Jesus, is so important.** Notice what our lesson says. Matthew writes that he “had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” Then he tells us that Jesus turned to his disciples and said, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

He’s talking about the work of evangelism. He’s talking about reaching out to people and bringing them into his family. “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” That’s who we are called to be--workers in the harvest field.

Can you see that the only motivation for what we call evangelism is Christ’s compassion for the world? We are not a business enterprise. Our motive is not a more impressive bottom line. Our goal is not to enhance institutional pride. Our aim is not to be the biggest and the best.

There are people outside the walls of this church who are confused, angry, hurting, dying. There are families that are disintegrating, young minds being destroyed by drugs, old folks feeling forgotten. The need is almost overwhelming. Truly the harvest is plentiful.

The question, then, is: where are the workers? Where are those committed to being the body of Christ in ministry to the world? Where are those who will point their family, their friends and their business associates to the One who can satisfy their needs in all circumstances for now and eternity?

I’m not talking about button-holing people on the street. I’m not talking about an offensive holier-than-thou kind of sanctimonious salesmanship. I’m talking about caring enough about people that you try to help them out of their confusion, loneliness and fear. Let me give you an example.

Catherine Marshall once told about a couple named Mary and Harold Brinig. Mary and Harold moved to Chicago many years ago. They had no friends in Chicago. Soon they were lonely. They were also irritable and unhappy with each other.

While seeking help from the Bible, they saw these words of Jesus: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.” (John 15:16)

Somehow that passage became like a light penetrating their darkness. They realized that much of their unhappiness was caused by self-centeredness. They wondered if Jesus was choosing them for some kind of unknown service. They also wondered what type of service they could possibly perform in such a big city as Chicago.

The first person they encountered after this discovery was the waitress who served them in a nearby restaurant. She apologized for giving them such slow service and said she was new in the city and miserable. They invited her to visit them in their apartment after work.

A neighbor who was a widower became the second person they befriended. Soon a dozen people were meeting once a week for conversation and prayer.

Out of these meetings grew a project called “Adventures in Friendship.” Soon scores of people were involved in visiting the lonely and the shut-ins throughout the whole area.

There was an interesting byproduct of this ministry. Mary and Harold became so absorbed in the needs of others that they soon forgot their own troubles. Their lives became immeasurably richer and fuller. (3)

Probably Mary and Harold would never have thought of what they were doing as evangelism. It didn’t fit the cup that they pictured when they thought of that word. They were simply showing compassion to people in need--in Jesus’ name. And, my friends, that is what the church of Jesus Christ is all about.

Jesus had compassion on the crowds. Harassed and helpless, they were like sheep without a shepherd. And there were so many of them. Just like today. “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” Where are the workers? Where are those who care enough to become involved in the lives of others? Where are those willing to take their time to show love to young people and old folks, to the substance abuser and the victims of broken families, to the down and out as well as the up and in? Where are the workers? Christ asks even today. Can he count on you?

1. *Sales Upbeat*.

2. http://www.faithfortoday.tv/article/504/blog/2012-blog-archive/he-will-never-let-go.

3. Catherine Marshall, *A Closer Walk* (Fleming H. Revell, 1986), pp. 74-76. Cited in Tim Hansel, *Eating Problems for Breakfast* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1988).

Dynamic Preaching, Collected Sermons, by King Duncan

II Fr Joseph Pellegrino

The readings for this Sunday present the People of Israel encamped before Mount Sinai. God tells Moses, "Remind the people of my care for them, how I defeated the Egyptians and bore up the People of Israel on eagles wings and brought you here to myself. Paul reminds the Romans of God's special care for his people when he tells them and us that Jesus died for us, so that we, enemies of God's kingdom through sin, might be reconciled with God. The just man died not just for good people, but even and especially for sinner. The Gospel reading presents the Lord filled with grief when he saw how much the crowds need him and how few people there were to continue his work. Jesus then begins the Apostolic Church. He calls the Twelve apostles to carry his presence to the world.

This Sunday is Father's Day. All Fathers, birth fathers, adoptive fathers and priests, are reminded of their mission to bring the caring protective love of the Lord to their families.

There have been both negative and positive concepts regarding Fathers in our papers recently. On the negative side, there is a direct relationship between the number of homes without fathers and the number of children who are in trouble with the law. The legalization of abortion has become the greatest anti-woman action of the century. Many future fathers tell the girls they have impregnated that they have no responsibility beyond the providing of the fee for an abortion. Those courageous girls with the moral integrity that will not allow themselves to be compromised are treated as though it was their choice to have a fatherless child.

On the positive side, many men are taking fatherhood very seriously. Fathers are taking an active role in their families. Movements like the Diocesan Men’s Conference, That Man is You, and the Promise Keepers have encouraged thousands of fathers to take an active role in the spiritual and moral leadership of their families.

Back in 1993 the Bishops of the United States issued a pastoral message, Follow the Way of Love, in which fathers were commended and encouraged. The bishops wrote:

More and more, fathers have been discovering how their involvement in parenting enriches both their children and themselves. This is a hopeful development. We urge men to interpret their traditional role of provider for a family in more than an economic sense. Physical care of children, discipline, training in religious values and practices, helping with school work, and other activities can and must be provided by fathers as well as mothers.

The role of the mother can be expressed with the concept of being the life-giving- nurturer. The nurturing which her body gives the child from conception through nursing becomes her basic relationship with her child. The good mother does not just teach her child like the school teacher, she feeds her child the basic messages of life.

The role of the father can be expressed with the concept of being the life giving

provider. Work is important, but providing for the family means a lot more than a pay check. The good father provides a Christian life for the child to grasp integrate into his or her life.

The good father makes real the caring, protective love of the Lord. On eagle's wings the Lord delivered his people from the evils of Egypt. When he keeps his home free from the immoral influences of modern society, the good father protects his children from the evils of the world with eagles wings. He cares for his children with the sacrifice of his day knowing that his life is richer when it is given for others, particularly for his own family. The good father is sent to proclaim the Gospel of Christ, and he begins with his children.

We pray for our Fathers. May they continue to be good fathers. May they provide for our children the care of the Father of us all.

III Desiano

**It’s hard to believe that it was over fifty years ago that we would flock to our televisions to watch Archie Bunker and his antics in the TV show “All in the Family.”  As we laughed at the irreverence of Archie Bunker—wasn’t this the beginning of casual irreverence for many things in our culture?—we also had seen an important, but often unrecognized, dimension of family: everyone belongs.**

**So not only did Archie Bunker have to put up with his son-in-law Meathead, Meathead had to put up with Archie too.  No matter the strains between them, the idea of family kept them together.  Don’t we recognize this in our own families—how people could be away for years but somehow return after all that time?  Robert Frost, the famous poet, said that “Home is when you there, they have to take you in.”**

**“They have to take you in” . . . because there’s a way that we come to belong to each other.  For all the times we are in danger of forgetting that, both in our personal families and in the human family, we belong to each other because we belong to God whom we call “Father.”  All of us are equally loved by this Father, however we are physically or emotionally; all of us have our destiny in this same God.**

**Just as God made the Israelites a family, which we see in the first reading, so Jesus formed a family of those who followed him.  We hear their names in the Gospel—most of them from different family and backgrounds, but now given the same mission.  Jesus is sending them out to proclaim that the “Kingdom of God has come”—a Kingdom that wants to unite all humankind into a family of grace and love.**

**We even hear the name of Judas at the end of this list.  This makes us wonder.  Didn’t Jesus know what Judas would do? Couldn’t Jesus read the people he was choosing?  What makes him different from the other disciples?  But the truth is that Judas is part of all of us.  We all have in our heads and hearts the capacity to act totally for ourselves and totally without awareness of God’s love.  We all can look Jesus in the face and still be thinking of our own ambition.**

**God loves this part of us as well—not so we can stay with our selfishness that leads to betrayal, but so that we can know that even this side of us cannot keep us from God or from the family that God wants to form.  We may write ourselves off, but God writes no one off.  St. Paul tells the Romans that God loved us when we were still distant and sinners.  We don’t have to be perfect to be part of God’s family.  We do have to accept God’s love and let that love transform us.  This was the very thing Judas would not do.**

**So here we are, in the sacred space of the Mass, each of us with our limitations and imperfections.  Here we are, each of us in need of God’s mercy and grace.  Here we are, gathered around the table to Jesus sets for those who want to accept his love more deeply, for those who commit themselves to following him.  We are all in the family, not so we can use and abuse each other, but so that Jesus can show us what it means to belong to God.**