

# HOMILY HINTS

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## May 25, 2014 - Sixth Sunday of Easter

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In today's second reading from the first letter of Saint Peter, followers of Jesus are encouraged to "always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but to do it with gentleness and reverence."

Being able to share with others the comfort and hope we experience as friends of Jesus is discussed by Bishop Zubik in his fourth pastoral letter: *The Church Evangelizing!*

"If we are serious about our role as evangelizers, we must speak up, either to ask questions about that which we don't understand or to defend what we know to be true. There is no need to censor ourselves when speaking about matters of faith." (#128)

"The world is starving for truth and for the clarity and consolation that comes with faith. We need to speak up in love. We can't be shy about our faith and its practice. How important it is for us to be vocal about our faith, particularly in prayer, especially with and for others!" (#129)

"To know our Catholic faith from both Scripture and Sacred Tradition is to have a rich treasure which needs to be shared with others—not only from the pulpit or in a classroom but over a cup of coffee or a glass of wine; at dinner in a restaurant or during a friendly chat on the phone." (#115)

Sharing our faith may not come naturally. In what settings are we most comfortable sharing our beliefs? In what settings are we least comfortable?

Let us pray, asking the Holy Spirit to help us to share our faith - in hope and with love.

## May 29, 2014 - Ascension of our Lord, Jesus Christ

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The first novena (nine days of prayer) occurred during these days between the Ascension of the Lord to heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Then and now prayer is essential. In his new pastoral letter *The Church Evangelizing!*, Bishop Zubik reminds us that prayer is the prerequisite of evangelization.

"When we grow in our genuine practice of prayer, we also grow in the awareness of God's presence. We 'practice the presence of God.' And that practice produces an inevitable effect on our lives. Through prayer, we grow in integrity because we come to know that God is always with us. It makes us *The Church Evangelizing!*" (#76)

"It is imperative that we see that everything in our lives needs to be grounded in prayer—a connection with, to and from God. Jesus is always ready to give us time—His time—and He has all the time in

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the world for us. If we want Jesus, we must in turn take and make the time for Him. We need to pray daily. The Church's tradition makes this easy for us. In our diocese, we have no shortage of Masses offered every day. We have many prayer groups that meet on a regular basis. We have retreat houses, monasteries, religious communities and formation centers dedicated to helping us converse with God." (#71)

"Prayer, connection with Jesus, is the necessary foundation of *The Church Evangelizing!*. We cannot share Jesus with others if we do not first know Him. We need to talk to Jesus regularly before we can introduce Him to others. After all, conversation is the sustenance of all relationships, and especially and particularly with Jesus. Prayer is the prerequisite before we can engage in the energy and effort of the New Evangelization." (#72)

"In the Spirit of Christ, I invite you to join with me in being evangelizers—strong in prayer, heartfelt in words, sealed with deeds, and sustained for the long haul, not with the language of the lips, but with the language of the heart. That, my friends, is the New Evangelization. That is *The Church Evangelizing!*." (#153)

## June 1, 2014 - Seventh Sunday of Easter

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In his pastoral letter *The Church Evangelizing!*, Bishop Zubik makes it clear that Jesus' words "go and make disciples" are directed to each and every one of us.

"As Jesus completed His earthly ministry, He told the people in His little flock not to be closed in on themselves. He said to them: "Go into the world and proclaim the Good News to every creature, make disciples of all nations." "Go into the whole world!" And don't just say what you need to say—Learn it! Love it! Live it! Proclaim it! Get excited about it! Jesus does not offer a low impact or a "lite" version of Christianity. He calls us, trusts us, to continue the work He began more than two millennia ago." (#23)

"Pope Francis has repeated the same call: "Evangelization is the Church's mission, not just of a few, but my, your, our mission." Everyone in the Church needs to do the work of telling the Good News. Our witness is needed right where we are at any given moment: in our homes; in our workplaces; in the supermarkets; in the gyms; in our classrooms; on the basketball courts; in the shopping malls and on our neighborhood streets. Pope Francis has made it clear that our witness must be to and for everyone": (#25)

*Sometimes we lose our enthusiasm for mission because we forget that the Gospel responds to our deepest needs, since we were created for what the Gospel offers us: friendship with Jesus and love of our brothers and sisters. If we succeed in expressing adequately and with beauty the essential content of the Gospel, surely this message will speak to the deepest yearnings of people's hearts. - Evangelii Gaudium #265*

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“Though Pope Francis captivates large crowds in Saint Peter’s Square, there are many more people he simply cannot reach. They are the ones you see day after day in your homes, neighborhoods and offices. They are the people you can lead to Jesus Christ.” (#29)

How do we lead people to Jesus – by being their friend and introducing them to our friend, Jesus.

“Evangelization, pure and simple, is the extension of the friendship with Jesus to others through us. To evangelize is to draw others into friendship with Christ. To be an evangelist is to be the face, the hands, the heart and the voice of Christ to those who long to hear a friendly voice and to see a friendly face.” (#40)

## June 8, 2014 - Pentecost

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It is through, with and in the Holy Spirit that Christians evangelize. The gifts of the Spirit equip us for the ministry of evangelization. Paul says it quite plainly to the Church at Corinth: “No one says ‘Jesus is Lord’, except by the Holy Spirit.”

For us to be a friend of Jesus and makes friends for Jesus, we need the Holy Spirit.

“To consider the work of the Church as friendship with Jesus may be a paradigm shift for some of us. It may mean a radical rethinking of how we approach what we’re already doing every day. It will certainly mean a training of the will so that we can grow more sensitive to the needs of the people around us.” (#77) **May the Spirit empower us for the ministry of evangelization.**

“The New Evangelization is not a job, a fad or a program. It is living the faith; it is passing it on. We all need to do what’s best for the people we serve. In our drive to help other people, we must run risks. It is all too easy, sometimes, to sacrifice the human element for the sake of greater efficiency. ”(#79) **May the Spirit empower us for the ministry of evangelization.**

“Friendship with Jesus must characterize everything that we do as followers of Jesus.” (#80) **May the Spirit empower us for the ministry of evangelization.**

“If we are teaching children or young adults about Jesus, we are not just doing a job. We are making friends for Jesus.”(#81) **May the Spirit empower us for the ministry of evangelization.**

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“If we are charged with serving the poor, we can never fall into the trap of statistics; we must not allow ourselves to measure success in terms of the gallons of soup dispensed or the number of sandwiches served. We are called to feed souls, and souls thrive on friendship. We need to make friends for Jesus.” (#82) **May the Spirit empower us for the ministry of evangelization.**

If we are answering the parish phone or passing out bulletins after Mass, we need to make friends for Jesus. If we sing in a funeral choir, visit the sick, lead a Bible study, help prepare couples for marriage or work at the parish fish fry, we need to be making friends for Jesus. (#83)  
**May the Spirit empower us for the ministry of evangelization.**

Faith in action isn't merely something we do. Faith in action is not a work, not a job. It is Jesus working through us and for others. To all of you, members of the Church of Pittsburgh, empowered by the Spirit of God: We need to change our mindsets. Doing the work of Jesus, the work of evangelization, being *The Church Evangelizing!* demands that we be friends and that we befriend others as Jesus is our friend and as He befriends us all.

**“With the Holy Spirit to guide and empower us, we can—indeed we must—make *The Church Evangelizing!* a transforming influence in southwestern Pennsylvania and beyond.” (#9)**

We heard in today's reading from the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles: “there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem.”

“True friendship is inclusive. It doesn't form a clique. It creates an ever-widening circle of friends. If our friendship with the Lord is truly a partnership with Him, it will motivate us to make more friends for Jesus Christ.” (#94)

“This is the way of the saints. This is the way of *The Church Evangelizing!* You and I, striving to live our friendship with the Lord and our partnership with each other—that should be our way of life as Church.” (#95)

## June 15, 2014 - Trinity Sunday

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Today the Church celebrates with great joy the beauty of nature of God. God is a relationship of three persons in love: Father, Son and Spirit.

“The Blessed Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—lives eternally in perfect communion. By grace, we are caught up into God's life. Saint Peter tells us that we have “come to share in the divine nature.” Through our baptism we die with our Friend, Jesus Christ, and we rise with Him to new life. Our new life is a friendship we could not have imagined or wished for apart from God's Self-revelation. Jesus did not simply tell us facts about the Trinity. He gave us a share in the life of the Trinity. That's friendship, friendship with God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit!” (#33)

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Friendship draws us into a bond of communion, one with another and then with others. (#34)

“This is what Jesus accomplishes by His friendship with us. He draws us into the bond of communion that He enjoys eternally with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. To be saved is to live in the communion of friendship with the Blessed Trinity and to share that life with the whole household of God.” (#35)  
We hear in today’s second reading, Saint Paul offering the Church in Corinth guidance. “Mend your ways, encourage one another.” Similarly in his pastoral letter, *The Church Evangelizing!* Bishop Zubik outlines for us eight building blocks for the new evangelization.

1. Practice Hospitality
2. Know the Faith
3. Speak Up
4. Give Correction
5. Be Loyal
6. Stay in Touch
7. Remember the Poor
8. Be Encouraging

These eight activities are how we build friendships with and for Jesus. This is how we are *The Church Evangelizing!* to the Father through the Son and with the Spirit.

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