

**“He first found his own brother, Simon, and told him, ‘We have found the Messiah’...”**

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

**Once upon a time**, after an old man was settled into his room, the nurse asked,

**“What is your religion of preference?”**

The old man looked at the nurse and said,

**“I’m glad you asked that question! I think I’ve always wanted to be a Catholic, BUT... nobody ever asked me before. You’re the first one.”**

That true story raises a rather embarrassing question. ‘What, exactly, **IS** that question?’ you ask.

**Well, I’m glad you asked that question!**

It’s this: **Why do so many of us hesitate to share our faith with others?**

As you may have noticed, each of today’s scriptures have the faith being shared: Eli with Samuel, as a young boy, Paul with the Corinthians, John the Baptist with two of his disciples, and finally, Andrew sharing his faith (in Jesus) with his brother Simon... the first pope-to-be!

One answer for not sharing our faith more readily is... we think others aren’t interested in Jesus. In response to that, I point to the old man in the opening story, who most thought wasn’t interested in Jesus, either. They probably thought, that old man would have ‘looked into it’ long ago.

Now, to expose the error of such assumptions:

**Once upon a time**, a high school teacher (obviously a Catholic h.s. teacher) asked his class to interview three (3) people about prayer...they were to ask these five (5) questions:

1. Do you pray?
2. Do you pray daily ...or only occasionally?
3. Why—do you pray?
4. How—do you pray?
5. Who—taught you to pray?

Three (3) surprises emerged from the students’ interviews.

**1<sup>st</sup>**, the students were surprised at how willing people were to talk about prayer.

**2<sup>nd</sup>**, the students were surprised at how many people prayed daily.

**3<sup>rd</sup>**, the students were surprised at how many of their close friends prayed; they’d never discussed it.

One of the students said:

**“I thought my friends would make fun of the interview, but they didn’t. They respected it. One of my friends said he was glad to talk about something that really mattered for a change.”**

The student concluded:

**“What I got out of the interview project was: people really care about prayer.”**

This brings me to an important point: **We should share our faith with others.**

Remember, had the nurse not asked the old man about religion, he’d have died without fulfilling his dream of becoming a Catholic.

Remember, had Andrew not shared his faith with his brother, Peter, most likely, he would not have been the ‘rock,’ upon whom Jesus built his Church.

Remember, had not Andrew shared his faith with that young boy with the loaves & fish, the crowd on the hillside that day would have gone home hungry, instead of witnessing the miracle of the loaves and fish and the Gospel would have gone without one of the most inspiring stories in all of Scripture!

*So, in conclusion:*

*Today's readings invite us to take a long, hard look at our reluctance to share our faith with others. It does **not** suggest that we should go from door to door or, otherwise, irritate people. Yet, ...if we believe the Gospel life of Jesus is 'good news' and ...if we believe that Jesus is the greatest treasure the human heart can possess, then we ought **not be reluctant** to share our faith with our children, with our friends, with those we know are searching for something in which to believe.*

*Without nagging or being an irritant, we should be conscious of inviting back to the Church those Catholics who have been, 'PMIA,' = '**P**arishioner **M**issing **I**n **A**ction.' Without their presence, we are not the fullness of our parish, the Body of Christ, which we are meant to be. A periodic invitation, along with our consistent example, may be all that it might take for one of our brothers or sisters to return, to 'come home.' Tell them to read this homily (1/14/18) on the St. Francis Parish website, that I was asking about them, and that they're missed.*

*I now close with this simple prayer:*

**Lord, teach each one of us that, here on earth,**

*You have no hands, but ours...to reach out to the needy.*

*You have no heart, but ours... to embrace the lonely.*

*You have no voice, but ours...to share your story of...*

*why you lived, suffered, and died for us.*

*Lord, teach us, that here on earth...*

**We** ...are your hands

**We** ... are your voice

**We** ...are your heart.

*I pray that Almighty God—our Abba, will bless you...*

*the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*