

# PREACHING CHRIST TO NON-CHRISTIANS

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Homily of Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> Week of Easter, June 6, 2011  
Acts 19:1-8, Ps. 67, John 16:29-33

“And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, arguing and pleading about the kingdom of God; but when some were stubborn and disbelieved, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them, taking the disciples with him, and argued daily in the hall of Tyrannus. This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:8-10).

It is not always possible to do what St. Paul did in Ephesus, namely, preach Christ to those who do not believe in him; but when it is possible, this is the vocation of the Church—to preach to all the word of God and the message that Jesus Christ is the only Son of God, incarnated only once for the salvation of the entire world. Christ sent us for this. For this, the Father poured out the Holy Spirit upon the Church. “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). A Christian should share his faith with those who do not have it, and the Church should preach and proclaim the salvation that God has sent to the world in his incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. The Church cannot content herself in leaving nonbelievers in the dark about the saving death of Jesus Christ on the cross for all humanity. All should know and have the opportunity to come to believe in this for their salvation and the forgiveness of their sins.

No one is saved except through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross (Acts 4:12; John 14:6; 1 John 5:12; John 3:36), and everyone should know this. Even if a person does not know this, if he is saved, he is saved through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. But so that all might know this, the Church has been sent unto the ends of the earth, to preach Christ to nonbelievers. It is God’s clear will that the Church preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15; Matt. 28:19-20).

Sin is man’s greatest enemy, and God himself has given us the solution to this problem in the death of his Son for us on the cross and in his glorious resurrection from the dead. He cancelled our sins by his death, suffering their punishment for us on the cross, and he rose from the dead to justify us (Rom. 4:25) in that our death sentence was served for us by him. He took our part on the cross, and this brings us the greatest relief. It relieves us from guilt, which is

what depresses us and cripples our spirit. God's justification cures us of this depression, for it removes our sin and our sense of guilt. We are justified by believing in Jesus Christ and invoking the merits of his vicarious death on the cross, especially within the powerful sacrament of reconciliation, which gives us such relief (Matt. 18:18; John 20:23).

"Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3). This is what the Church preaches to the world. To preach this message, which liberates the human spirit from its slavery, is the missionary work of the Church. This message is for the entire world. It is for Hindus, Buddhists, and Jews. It is for those of Africa, and of all parts of the world. It is an error to believe that each people's religion is sufficient for them, and that we should not preach Christ to them. This is contrary to the clearly revealed will of God. The risen Christ said to all the apostles together, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:46-48).

In our day we should emphasize the importance of the mission of the Church to those who do not yet believe in Christ. Today we can and should use the internet to reach many who would never enter one of our churches to hear us preach. Many can be easily reached in this way. Ours is the day of internet evangelization, as well as television and radio evangelization. But the internet has the advantage that everyone can use it.