

I'll just give a brief homily on our topic of giving an effective witness before we watch the Catholic Services Video.

We walk in many different circles; we have different groups of people that we know in different contexts. When we talk about giving an effective witness, it is good to identify that those are the fields in which we labor. The people that we interact with are our brothers and sisters, people no different than us, but who perhaps have not found the path of discipleship that leads to happiness. It is our part to help them find that path. That is the witness that we give to the good news that Christ has shown us the way to salvation.

How do we communicate that? How do we touch the hearts of others so that they might want to take that first step of discipleship? St. Paul tells us his strategy in our second reading, and it's a good one. To the Jews, he says, he spoke like a Jew, in order to win over the Jews. To the Gentiles, he spoke like a Gentile, in order to win over the Gentiles. To the weak, he became weak, in order to win over the weak. He spoke in a way that others would hear.

Now, he was not acting when he did this. He did not have to pretend like he was one of them. He *was* one of them. He *was* a Jew. He was also a Roman citizen, and spent a lot of time with Gentiles. And he *was* weak, telling us elsewhere of the many sufferings and hardships he endured. So when he gave witness in these

different circles, he was, in effect, giving witness to himself. So when he asked himself, “How do I give witness in a way that they will hear?” the answer was, “Well, how would *I* want to hear this message?” And the answer to that is, “I would want to hear it from someone who I understand and who understands me. As a Jew, I would want to hear it from a Jew as a Jew. As a Gentile, I would want to hear it from a Gentile as a Gentile. As one who is weak, I would want to hear it from someone who is also weak as one who is weak.” So that’s what he did.

And that’s what we do. When we give witness to others of our faith, all we have to do is be honest, because we’re speaking to others just like us.

As we reflect on this, we realize that this works best when we all work together. I can give witness to someone who has lost a spouse and suffers with grief, but not as well as someone else who has also lost a spouse. I can give witness to a recent immigrant who feels displaced in a foreign country, but not as well as another immigrant can. God will use whatever witness we can give, but there are those who are in our wheelhouse, for whom we are uniquely suited to touch when we share our experience with Christ.

Next week, we will conclude this series by reflecting on the healing that comes when one encounters Christ. Let us not be afraid to be the one that brings others to that encounter.