

MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP

'Go and make disciples' means meeting people where they are

BY BOB WELLINSKI
NWIC Correspondent

"... Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations..."

(MATTHEW 28:19)

CHESTERTON – "Jesus is giving us this mission - to go and make disciples," said Rich Harter, M.T.S. while speaking at the diocesan Missionary Discipleship training.

Dozens of people from across the Diocese of Gary gathered to hear Harter and Pete Burds speak at St. Patrick on April 13. Harter is the director of the John Paul II Center for the New Evangelization for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, while Burds is the center's director of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Outreach.

Harter said that discipleship has always been missionary, but the Church has lost that missionary sense. He explained that although we may see the main message, that we are to "make disciples," Harter stressed we need to first look at the word "Go."

"We're going somewhere. There needs to be movement. We can't sit



Robert Gromala (left), of St. John the Evangelist talks with Rich Harter (center) and Pete Burds during the Missionary Discipleship training at St. Patrick in Chesterton on April 13. Harter and Burds are from the John Paul II Center for the New Evangelization at the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Wisc. (Bob Wellinski photo)

there and be with Catholic people like me, who talk like me and hope. There needs to be a going, whether inside the parish or outside of the parish," he said.

"Everywhere is mission territory - family, neighbor, in the workplace. Many times, we think of places like Africa South or Central America," Harter explained. "But, there's a mission right here, right in front of our noses."

Burds echoed those

thoughts.

"There are those in our lives, in our parish, family members, friends who feel disconnected from the Lord. This is mission territory. These are real people Jesus is seeking and wants to find," he said.

The two stressed that we are all called to evangelize "in some way, shape, or form." For those who do not feel like they are the right person for the job, Burds gives this advice.

"(Jesus) may want to use little old you, who feels inadequate in certain situations, who may not know all the answers, who may not feel you're the right person. But Jesus may be saying that 'you're the right person because of the situation you're in,'" Burds said.

Harter explained that if we wait until we're properly trained, nothing will happen. "We'll never get there . . . we're all sinners. The disciples did not

have theology degrees or titles; they were inadequate broken everyday dudes . . . kind of like us," said Harter.

Both men agreed that Catholics have a resource given to us by Christ - "a power at our disposal"- the Holy Spirit. "The Lord depends on us to say 'yes,'" said Harter. "We are simply the vessels. Think of yourself as a musical wind instrument that the Holy Spirit breathes through and makes beautiful music."

Harter and Burds said that missionary discipleship is not just another program or video series.

"It's relational. We can't make disciples outside relationships," said Harter. He reminded the group that Jesus himself "didn't sit in the temple, He went to (the people)." He told the group that sometimes we "churchify" people too much. Too many times we push the church card - "If you went to church more (you would) be happier."

"Although that may be true, is that really helping a person become a disciple?" Harter asked, noting that "We need to meet people where they're at - be a friend to them and continue

with them on their journey."

The men stressed that discipleship is a process, not a program.

"We want saints, but we're asking them to leap from where they're at now to sainthood. We're giving them a goal without rungs on the ladder," Harter stated, adding, "How do I get there? Walk with me, show me the way."

However, Harter and Burds stressed avoiding jumping too far ahead.

"The first thing is that we have to think of ourselves," said Harter. There is a need to reflect upon whether one feels they are a disciple maker, discern where their relationship is with Christ and how they are deepening that relationship.

"(Start by thinking) about a person you want to bring to Christ - a real person with a real need, and walk with them," Harter suggested

Michelle Dailey said "It crystalized for me that it can be simple. Don't make it too complicated. It's all about relationships." She added, "We need to keep that focus that we are connecting with people with an eye moving toward Christ."

ENGAGING THE SPIRIT

Rosary app for smart phones connects people, prayer



BY VANESSA NEGRETE
Northwest Indiana Catholic

I remember being a kid in Chicago and riding in the car with my dad, listening to the on-air antics of radio personality Kevin Matthews. Matthews had 10 million listeners weekly in his heyday who were entertained by his character voices and stories.

Now he's the voice I hear every morning when I pray the Rosary.

Matthews was one of the speakers at the recent women's conference hosted by the diocese. The turnout was great; about 600 women attended. When it was Matthews' turn to talk, he introduced himself and asked the crowd for a show of hands to see how many people knew who he was and how many had never heard of him.

Those of us familiar with his style of entertainment - marked by lots of great, silly characters and plenty of potty humor - might have been a little wary of what was to come. He was there to talk about our Blessed Mother, after all.

But instead of focusing



on his celebrity friends (sure, he name dropped Chris Farley and Bill Murray during the course of his talk), he focused on Mary. He kept calling himself "Mary's roadie" as he told the story of his encounter with a broken statue of Mary near a dumpster and how he now tours with the statue and shares his story.

He wrote a book called "Broken Mary" about that experience, about his life in radio and being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. And he told the crowd

about an app he created with the help of a religious sister and a techie app developer who is an atheist, according to Matthews.

It is a free app for smart phones called "Broken Mary." Once you download the app to your phone, you tap the icon on your phone and a message pops up asking, "Do you want to play today's Rosary?" with an option to tap "yes" or "no."

If you tap "yes," you will play a recording - typically about 20 minutes long - of Matthews reciting the Rosary for that day. Yes, the app even knows which days to pray the Joyful, Sorrowful, Luminous or Glorious mysteries.

If you tap "no," a screen will pop up and give you

the option again to pray the Rosary, read the story of "Broken Mary" or ask for a prayer. If you tap "Ask for a Prayer," a box pops up and allows you to type a prayer request.

I don't know if it is the novelty of hearing Matthews' voice recite the Rosary or simply the ease of using the app, but I am hooked. Praying the Rosary was a struggle for me. I always thought I was doing it wrong, so I shied away from it.

When I left the women's conference, I knew I would write something about it for this Engaging the Spirit feature, but I thought it would be about evangelization. That is the ecclesial area I write about most in this space, and it seemed

like the most natural connection to the conference. But it became clear that the conference also had strong ties to the ecclesial area of sacraments, prayer and worship, another focus of our synod.

I believe in the power of praying the Rosary, and now this free app and a familiar voice are the ones leading me every morning. I encourage you to download the app for free, or download one of the many other prayer apps to help connect you to your faith.

To tell us how your parish is following the Holy Spirit's lead in this synod process, contact Vanessa Negrete at vnegrete@dcgary.org or 769-9292, ext. 246.