

Today’s selection from the Acts of the Apostles detailing the missionary journeys of Sts. Paul and Barnabas reads like a travelogue. In fact, out of the Book of Acts 28 chapters, fully 15 are given over to the person and missionary preaching and journeying of St. Paul.

Both Pope emeritus Benedict XVI and now Pope Francis have called the church to take up the work of the “New Evangelization.” What’s “new” in the new evangelization is **not** the message—God’s love for us in Jesus. What’s “**new**” is the **call for each of us** to personally and actively take up the mission given to us by our baptism, confirmation, and renewed in this and every Mass to bring the gospel into the everyday situations to which life leads us. Paul and Barnabas are our models. Everywhere and everyone they met were fields in which they sowed the gospel.

This weekend and next we celebrate the First Holy Communion of our second-grade-aged children. As part of the “new evangelization” those of you who are parents have been given some of the responsibility for teaching and witnessing to what the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist means. This is not something new. At baptism you promised to be the “first educators of your children” in the ways of faith. I remember my parents making time nightly to listen to my catechism lessons as a child, teaching me my prayers, and witnessing to our faith by their faithful participation in Mass on Sunday and the Sacrament of Penance. We celebrate with you and your children as you together encounter Jesus’ love in a special way at this time.

Also, this weekend we welcome Brian Casey, who will lead us through our parish mission these next days. Like all of you, Brian is a layperson. I pray that his witness will give all of you insight, courage and strength in your commitment to be a Paul or Barnabas in carrying the love of God in Jesus to the members of your family and to everyone you encounter.