

# Grab Your Shoes and Coat!

## UNIVERSAL CHURCH

One of the most beautiful things about our Catholic faith is the way it takes us into the world so that others may come to love Jesus. Jesus says, ***“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28: 19-20).***

You are probably wondering how we can do this when there are so many languages and cultures. Perhaps you have little contact with people from other countries and places, or are shy about talking to others in your school and church. When we hear this call to go into the world, it is important to know that God never asks us to do what is beyond our abilities. Already, God has given you and me everything we need to go into other cultures and places so that we can share the Good News of God’s love and care for all.

From the very beginning, our Catholic Church has celebrated its unity and diversity. The Church, as the Body of Christ, has many members, all from every corner of the world. This is one reason why we can say that our Catholic Church is truly universal. For example, in our Church of St. Louis, we have parishes with brothers and sisters from Latin America, Africa, the Philippines, East and South Asia. Also, we know from our history of St. Louis, that many came from countries in Europe; places like Italy, Germany, France, Ireland, Spain and Poland.

We are truly blessed to have a Church that is universal because this means that we are united by what we believe and Christ has called each of us to share our unity in faith with all people. Our Church tradition, inspired by the Holy Spirit, encourages us to welcome everyone that comes to us and to share what we believe. In *Dei Verbum 1*, the Council Fathers of Vatican II tell us that Jesus has given us this mission, “...so that by hearing the message of salvation the whole world may believe, by believing it may hope, and by hoping it may love.” When we welcome the stranger and those who come from different places, we bring to life our true identity: to be like Jesus Christ who reaches out to everyone.

So how can you keep Jesus’ mission alive? How can you go into the world with God’s love and message? Some suggestions:

- When you meet others who speak a different language or do not look like you, remember to smile. You can always smile in your own language!
- Explore other cultures by trying different cultural foods or by reading books, watching TV and documentaries that show you how others share life.
- Use technology like email, texting, Facebook, and Twitter to share your faith with others. Let others know how much you love Jesus.
- Pray: we can all pray for one another and ask God to bless us each day. Reach out to others in the way you know best. Christ is in all of us!

**Q: Can you think of other ways of going into the world with God’s love? Q: What can you do to be more universal like Jesus?**

F.Javier Orozco, OFS, PhD

