

The point Jesus brings to us is that you and I are disciples. That you, individually, and you, collectively, and I have a task of bringing the message of Jesus to the ends of the earth. Now I don't expect you to go to Timbuktu. I don't expect you to go to Asia. I do expect you to go to the ends of the pews. I do expect you to go to the community in which you live, which might be just basically your immediate family, your immediate neighbors, your immediate circle of friends, and spread the message of the Gospel. Not by button-holing people and saying, "Hey, have you heard about the message of the Gospel? Sit down, let me tell you about it." That's not how it works.

What Isaiah says is that God is saying to His Son, who is God, yet He will be the one who will bring people to Him, and through them, they will spread that message to the ends of the earth.

There is at least one theory that the manner in which the Gospel spread originally was because people were fundamentally kind to one another. The initial population of the Roman empire in the decades following Jesus survived wars and particularly diseases through the fact that they took care of one another. They made an effort to be good and kind to each other, as a result of which it was impressive to their pagan neighbors. "See how these Christians, how they love one another?" was the way Josephus, the Jewish historian of the Roman empire of that period put it. "See how these Christians love one another"

I don't know that a pagan historian taking a look at predominantly Catholic places, countries, nations, would actually write the same thing today. It is interesting that in those areas of the world where Christians are under active persecution, attendance at church is exploding. Fr. Fallon was over in Thailand recently with Fr. Peter John, and they visited Hanoi. He told me last evening that the churches they went to were absolutely packed.

Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular are under active attack in what would have been North Vietnam today. During the time leading up to the Vietnam war that was an area of Vietnam that was heavily, heavily Catholic, but the majority of Catholics moved to South Vietnam. The majority of Catholics were French speaking Vietnamese. And today, what is it now 25 years later, under attack from the Communist government, the churches there are full. That's not true in the United States. That's not true in Western Europe. We've become complacent.

Now part of what's involved in Confirmation, and a very substantial majority of the people at this Mass have received the Sacrament of Confirmation. Confirmation involves a willingness to follow the message of the Gospel, a willingness to take on the task of spreading the message of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. We don't need to go to foreign lands, but we do need to see that in the context of our own community. Catholicism in particular is under major pressure right here in the U.S. in general. We need to understand the message of the Gospel and make an effort to live it.

We have a large number of teens at this Mass who will receive Confirmation in a couple of weeks. One of the Bishops is going to be here for that. He will remind you that you're undertaking a commitment to bring the message of the Gospel to the people with whom you come in contact on a regular basis. Looking toward that, I want this to be a reminder to everybody else here who has received the Sacrament of Confirmation, that when you received the Sacrament of Confirmation you made a commitment you would live your life in such a way that you would bring the message of the Gospel to the people of your world. And for those of you who did not receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, I would remind you that we have a program at Holy Spirit which you can use to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Isaiah tells us today about what the Father wants, namely that we as disciples would bring the message of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Isaiah is actually talking to you and to me, and telling us what it is the Father wants us to do, what the Father wants us to be, and that to be is His messengers to all the people with whom we come in contact.