

## The Key Step from Disciple to Apostle – Sherry Weddell helps us understand what it means to move from being a disciple to becoming an apostle.

Maturing men and women disciples begin to share their faith with others. Their Christian witness becomes fruitful for others. “Times of genuine revival and transforming mission are always the fruit of a wide variety of apostles – lay, religious and ordained...”. The great Catholic revival referred to by historian Orest Ranum as the “Generation of Saints” in early 17th c. France emerged from circumstances grimmer than our own. France had been convulsed by 8 religious civil wars between Catholics and Protestants over 32 years, in which 2 to 4 million people died. 20% of the population of Paris died in a religiously-fuelled military siege. The exhausted survivors looked about them and were led to try a different path.

There had already been a tradition in parts of Europe of an intercessory citywide or diocesan-wide version of 40 Hours Eucharistic Adoration that involved all the churches of an area. The idea was that there would be intense prayer before the Eucharistic Lord Jesus for 40 hours in one parish, followed by 40 hours in another parish, etc. The goal was progressive intercessory adoration that moved around church to church throughout the city. Pope Clement mandated this in the city of Rome.



Shortly after, the newly ordained future St Francis de Sales began an evangelizing mission in France. His goal was to restore the Catholic Faith in Savoy, where every church had been destroyed or closed for 60 years, and where 60,000 had left the Church and only about 100 underground Catholics remained. In 4 years of intense evangelical ministry, he and some helpers brought 40,000 second- and third-generation former Catholics back to the Church. De Sales was made bishop of that region. This was the first chapter in what became a missionary revival that involved tens of thousands of French Catholics that transformed the Catholic Church in France, which from there spread to regions like Canada and Southeast Asia. With St Francis de Sales’ help and guidance, Catholics turned their energies to prayer and penance, heroic systematic charity, evangelization, missionary work, creating the Catholic school and the seminary system and reshaping the local parish in a missionary mode. They

engaged the needs of their time – a post-Reformation shattered Christendom – in the power of the Holy Spirit. “Let us see what love will do” was St Francis’ motto. What can we learn from this remarkable group? They were intentional disciples, who knew that they could not simply follow Jesus alone, but rather as part of a larger community of disciples. They were in mission together – clergy, religious and laity. They regarded parishes as



centres of missionary formation and outreach. They were present- and future-oriented. They creatively applied the Catholic faith to the unique needs of their generation. They expected God to act, trusting in the Holy Spirit’s guidance and inspiration. They knew that ongoing discernment was critical. They were deeply prayerful. They knew that all spiritual and cultural transformation begins and ends with individuals and communities encountering God in a profound way. They were especially aware of the incredible importance of communal intercessory prayer to lay the foundation for fruitful evangelization.” We have to believe and trust that renewal is possible in our own time as well. If we go to Jesus in personal and community adoration, He will empower us to bring His truth, love, and mercy to the people we meet.

We will become apostles!

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people.

1 Timothy 2:1

