

In today's first reading we hear about ministry and the appointment of the first deacons in the church. According to the reading, there was a problem in the early church. It seems that the Jewish widows who spoke only Greek were being neglected. Those who spoke either Aramaic or Hebrew were being taken care of. And so there was a meeting to address this problem and it was decided that the leaders of church would pray over seven individuals and then lay their hands on them commissioning them to serve the Jewish widows that spoke only Greek. The Spirit inspired the church members to address this need, to go out of their comfort zone, which they did.

Pope Francis has asked the members of the church not to be afraid to get dirty in their serving of the needy. He challenges all of us to evangelize, to go out and to preach the good news either in word or in action. The Filipino community gathered here this morning has consistently answered this service call very well. When there is any need either within the community or outside the community or with an individual or in a family, all of you give of yourselves and do your best to address and to work to alleviate all their needs. All of you serve as a model of a caring community.

In doing so you are imitating the young man, St. Pedro, whose feast day we celebrate today. He was a trained catechist who accompanied his Jesuit superior to the islands we call today the Mariannas to do missionary work. The catechists were young men whose age ranged from 12 to 14. Pedro felt a need to go; he felt the Lord was calling him to this ministry, he was convinced that the Good News of Jesus had to be preached to the islanders, and so he left all at home, his family and friends, and joined the missionaries in the outer islands. After working for about three years with his Jesuit superior, both were martyred for their faith on the island of Guam. He died at the age of 17. He was pierced by a spear and then his skull was smashed in with a short heavy sword. The islanders then took both his body and the body of his superior out to sea and attached rocks to them and sent them to the bottom of the sea.

St. Pedro Calungsod is a model for all of us. For our young people, he serves as a model of one who knew something that had to be done – the conversion of the islanders – and then with trust in God left home, joined the missionaries and was brave enough to face death rather than give up his faith. I hope none of you has to make this choice of remaining true to your faith or giving up your life. St. Pedro tells us that we should not be afraid of preaching our faith by our words and our actions, both when convenient and inconvenient. This might take the form of reaching out to your peers who are hurting because they are rejected. It might take the form of befriending someone who needs a friend. But no matter what form it takes, we must imitate Christ and address the need as best we can.

People who do not fall into this young category can see a need and then address that need as quickly and as completely as possible. Perhaps one can help out a family that is caring for an elderly person who is either physically or mentally incapacitated by spending a few hours with the ill person to give relief to the care giver.

This young man serves as a challenge to all of us to do what we can according to our age and ability. He set the example. He left his home, went to foreign lands and died a martyr. We probably will not be called to do this, but we can help those who continue to minister to those ill in their families because of our care and concern for them. We can free young people who feel

they have no friends by extending a hand in friendship to them. Let's look around and see what we can do. With St. Pedro in mind, let us leave our comfort zone and do what we can to spread the Good News of the Kingdom of God and thus alleviate the evil that pervades our world.

*Homily by Rev. William Metzger, Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Church*

