

Reflections on the Constitutions, Chapter 12
by Mel Hermanns

Shortly after arriving at Our Lady Gate of Heaven, Chicago, in 1999, the archdiocese launched a diocesan-wide evangelization program. Based on Paul VI's apostolic exhortation, "Evangelium Nuntiandi", the new evangelization begins with active believers, allowing the Spirit to develop in us a transforming and deepened relationship with Jesus.

Chapter XII of our new constitutions, while largely focusing on the spreading of the Gospel message to other cultures and regions, reflects consistently what St. Francis and Pope Francis call us to: be joyful proclaimers of the Good News by our very lives and attitudes. "Preach always, if necessary, use words" and "gloomy disciples become disciples of gloom."

"The proclamation of the Gospel and the life of faith" deeply interface, united in our personal relationship with Jesus. Late in December 2012, about 4 months after leaving the people of "The Gate" — whom I loved and who loved me — we celebrated a reunion. At least half the parish membership spent an afternoon, visiting and sharing, playing games and listening to music. I had been to hell and back with every household of the parish.....had been profoundly a part of their joys and sorrows. Toward the end of the afternoon, the choir stood and sang the following:

Hear these praises from a grateful heart,
each time I think of you, praises start,
love you so much, Jesus, love you so much.

And as they sang, they were gesturing to me.

I was aghast. It sounded like heresy. Then it hit me: I had been Jesus to them; and surely they had been Jesus to me. Faith had deepened & evangelization had happened.