SELF-PROMOTION VS. EVANGELIZATION

We live in a time when relentless self-promotion is subconsciously the new normal. Give someone a smartphone, and most likely that person will use it to take a photo of himself/herself and post it online. Give someone a platform on social media and he/she will likely post anything about his/her preferences. We have become a generation craving for likes. One would do anything just to get likes or shares, desperate for virtual social acceptance. Once we have the platform, there is the risk for self-promotion for the wrong reasons. Self-promotion is the opposite of evangelization.

The face of evangelization 500 years ago is no less than the Sto. Niño de Cebu, reminding us of Christianity coming to our shores. This event gave us Filipinos the vision to be evangelizers as well. Today, the social media is the most viable means of spreading the Good News. In our Gospel, let us learn from Jesus, the Sto. Niño, how to be evangelizers carrying genuine proclamation.

Jesus counters the culture of relentless self-promotion and meaningless self-aggrandizement by using the image of a child to demonstrate greatness. In the eyes of Jesus, a child is great because a child personifies humility and has no agenda. God wants us to promote not ourselves but the values of the Kingdom, which are lasting, universal and beautiful expressions of our humanity. Instead of promoting our faces, which will eventually be worn out, why not promote something that actually helps?

Self-promotion is the modern expression of the sin of pride, which has disguised itself in the past in the form of vanity, arrogance, selfishness, and individualism. It is the relentless putting of oneself into a pedestal, like the disciples asking Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?" Hitherto the disciples have only seen their Master as a channel of greatness, upon whom they can pin their hopes for personal greatness, thus vindicating their sacrifice of leaving their former lives for his sake. Jesus now teaches them the hard lesson that ambition and glory, as long as God's Kingdom is concerned, must be seen in the eyes of a child.

We live in a world where there is a plethora of available means to be great in the eyes of the world. Social media promises fame, riches, and power once we learn to explore its many rules and venues. It's not bad to utilize social media. In fact, there are bloggers who use social media to preach the word of God and some values, and other human spiritual needs. There are people who have become faces of promoting the Gospel values and they are doing it well.

Social media can become—and, fortunately, is already—an instrument for evangelization for the people of God. Evangelization is the work of God and we are just instruments. St. Arnold Janssen said: "The proclamation of the Good News is the greatest act of charity," but for us to proclaim to be genuine, we must set aside our egos. The Gospel challenges us to tear out and throw away that which causes us to stumble. It is challenging us to eventually remove the self from the Gospel we preach so that God may increase, even at our expense. It is challenging us to eventually remove the self from our proclamation so that only Jesus Christ would stand out.

It is our mission by virtue of our baptism to proclaim the Good News to everyone. While we are not forced or obliged to use our social media platforms to evangelize, we are nevertheless encouraged to do so in the spirit of Christian charity. Proclamation in itself is an act of charity. Proclaiming it devoid of our biases and agenda is the completion of charity in this ministry.

Let us ask the Sto. Niño to teach us and move us to aspire for greatness in the eyes of God everyday, and shun the shallow promise of earthly greatness.

Rev. Jose Carlos Rapadas, SVD

Pastoral Catechesis for the Ecumenism: Additional Historical Facts
Year of Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue, and Indigenous People
— Fr. James H. Kroeger, MM

New attitudes toward ecumenical initiatives began to emerge in the Catholic Church in the 1950s. A document from the Holy Office in Rome spoke of the ecumenical movement as inspired by the Holy Spirit. Catholic experts were permitted (under strict conditions) to participate in some dialogues. In fact, some Vatican-appointed "observers" were allowed to join discussions with the World Council of Churches.

The significant breakthrough came with the 1958 election of Pope John XXIII (now a canonized saint). His openness to other Christians, flowing from his experience as papal representative in various countries of Eastern Europe, alarmed some other people in the Vatican. They were fearful of his constant emphasis on the need for Christian unity.

From the very beginning, John XXIII saw the movement toward Christian unity as one of the principal objectives of the Second Vatican Council. He established a new department in the Vatican: Secretariat for Christian Unity. One of its tasks was to help prepare for Vatican II. Most significantly, he brushed aside various precedents; he invited about sixty Protestants and Orthodox to come to Vatican II as official observers. Indeed, we marvel at John XXIII's openness to the Holy Spirit's inspirations!
THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon (Ps 65:4)
All the earth shall bow down before you, O God, and shall sing to you, shall sing to your name, O most High!

Greeting
(The sign of the cross is made here)

P — The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
All — And with your spirit.

Introduction
(These or similar words may be used to address the assembly.)

P — The feast of the Sto. Nino brings to our attention the mystery of Jesus’ childhood. The devotion instills in us the virtues of simplicity, obedience, and trust in God. At the same time it calls for mature discipleship and loving service to all.

Such is the admonition of today’s Gospel. We are called to become like children, ever humble, careful not to despise, so that we may enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Penitential Act

P — Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.
(Pause)

P — You were sent to heal the contrite of heart: Lord, have mercy.
All — Lord, have mercy.

P — You came to call sinners: Christ, have mercy.
All — Christ, have mercy.

P — You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us: Lord, have mercy.
All — Lord, have mercy.

P — May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.
All — Amen.

Gloria
All — Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect

P — Let us pray. (Pause)

Almighty God, your only Son, begotten from all ages, humbled himself as a child in Nazareth and became subject to Mary and Joseph. Grant that we may learn from his example to embrace your will in all things and, holding fast to the dignity of all, serve our lovely brothers and sisters with open hands and gentle heart.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.
All — Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading (Is 9:1-6) (Sit)

Isaiah prophesies that through the child who shall be called Prince of Peace, the Lord will grant peace and rejoicing to his people.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

THE PEOPLE WHO WALKED in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing, as they rejoice before you as at the harvest, as people make merriment when dividing spoils. For the yoke that burdened them, the pole on their shoulder, and the rod of their taskmaster you have smashed, as on the day of Midian. For every boot that trampled in battle, every cloak rolled in blood, will be burned as fuel for flames. For a child is born to us, a son is given us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. His dominion is vast and forever peaceful, from David’s throne, and over his kingdom, which he confirms and sustains by judgment and justice, both now and forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this!
— The word of the Lord.
All — Thanks be to God.

Respontorial Psalm (Ps 98)
R — The Lord is King; let the many isles be glad.

1. Sing to the Lord a new song, /for he has done wondrous deeds;/his right hand has won victory for him,/his holy arm. (R)
2. The Lord has made his salvation known:/in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice./He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness/toward the house of Israel. (R)
3. All the ends of the earth have seen/ the salvation by our God./Sing joyfully to the Lord, all you lands;/break into song; sing praise. (R)
4. Sing praise to the Lord with the harp,/ with the harp and melodious song./ With trumpets and the sound of the horn/ sing joyfully before the King, the Lord. (R)

Second Reading
(Eph 1:3-6, 15-18)

God loves us and has made us his adopted children in Christ. Paul reminds us to live up to our dignity by leading a holy and blameless life.
A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

BLESSED BE THE GOD and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved.

Therefore, I, too, hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and of your love for all the holy ones, do not cease giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him. May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones.

— The word of the Lord.
All — Thanks be to God.

Alleluia [Jn 1:14] (Stand)
All — Alleluia, alleluia. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel (Mt 18:1-5, 10)

P — A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
All — Glory to you, O Lord.

THE DISCIPLES approached Jesus and said, “Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?” He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said, “Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me.

“See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father.”

— The Gospel of the Lord.
All — Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily (Sit)

Profession of Faith (Stand)

All — I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,

(At the words that follow, up to and including and became man, all bow.)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful

P — The Holy Child reminds us of God’s power at work in our humility and weakness. Let us pray with confidence to the Father, for we are all his children. We pray:

R — Listen to the prayer of your children, Lord.
C — That the Pope, bishops, priests, and religious may always aspire for the Gospel values of love, humility, and service rather than power and influence, we pray: (R)
C — That our civil and political leaders may become fully convinced that true greatness is attained through service and care especially of the weak and those who have less in life, we pray: (R)
C — That the poor and the marginalized in our society may derive strength from the conviction that they have a special place in Jesus’ heart, we pray: (R)
C — That caring adults and committed organizations may attend to the needs of children of broken homes and those who suffer because of irresponsible parents, we pray: (R)
C — That our devotion to the Sto. Niño may help us grow in “wisdom and grace” before God, keep the spirit of a child, and live with our brothers and sisters in openness, freedom, and friendship. We pray: (R)
C — Let us pray for the urgent concerns of our community and our personal intentions (pause). We pray: (R)
P — Heavenly Father, listen to our prayers. Give us the courage to do your will so that we may be worthy to share the eternal happiness of your kingdom.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.

Presentaion of the Gifts

(Stand)

P — Pray, brethren...
All — May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name,
for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P — God our Creator, we offer the gifts of bread and wine to recall the childhood of your only Son. Let our offering become the sacrifice of him who brought forgiveness and peace to the world.

Grant this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All — Amen.

Preface II of the Nativity of the Lord

P — The Lord be with you.

All — And with your spirit.

P — Lift up your hearts.

All — We lift them up to the Lord.

P — Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All — It is right and just.

P — It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.

For on the feast of this awe-filled mystery, though invisible in his own divine nature, he has appeared visibly in ours; and begotten before all ages, he has begun to exist in time; so that, raising up in himself all that was cast down, he might restore unity to all creation and call straying humanity back to the heavenly Kingdom.

And so, with all the Angels, we praise you, as in joyful celebration we acclaim:

All — Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

(Kneel)

Acclamation (Stand)

All — We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord’s Prayer

All — Our Father...

P — Deliver us, Lord...

All — For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever.

Invitation to Peace

Invitation to Communion (Kneel)

P — Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

All — Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon (Lk 2:51)

Jesus went down with Mary and Joseph and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them.

Prayer after Communion (Stand)

P — Let us pray. (Pause)

Loving Father, you have nourished us at the banquet in honor of the Child born of the Virgin. We pray that we may advance in wisdom and grow daily in faith and works of love, so that we may find favor in your sight.

Grant this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All — Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

P — The Lord be with you.

All — And with your spirit.

Prayer over the People

P — Bow your heads and pray for God’s blessing.

(Pause)

Be near to those who call on you, O Lord, and graciously grant your protection to all who place their hope in your mercy that they may remain faithful in holiness of life and, having enough for their needs in this world, they may be made full heirs of your promise for eternity.

Through Christ our Lord.

All — Amen.

P — And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son (†), and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.

All — Amen.

Dismissal

P — Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.

All — Thanks be to God.