

Mission Made Possible
(Second Edition)

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MISSION OF THE **REDEEMER**
MINISTRIES



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Chapter 6

Part A

We have spoken a lot about evangelization. But where do we begin?

At every Mass we are told to “go forth.” But how exactly do we go about it?

We have life-changing, soul-saving news. But how do we get it out there?

We are afraid of being written off as weird “God-botherers.” But how can we let everyone know (because everyone needs to know) that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life?

The Gospel message is unchanging, but we have to be adaptable and resourceful, adjusting our communication appropriately. Hopefully, the previous chapter made it clear that the key is to get among people and listen to their stories in order to share Jesus with them in ways that are relevant to their lives. We have to listen first in order to then share the Gospel in language that makes sense in terms of the reality and uniqueness of each individual’s life circumstances.

The Genesis Mission

Why the name *Genesis Mission*? In the book of Genesis, we read accounts of creation as the Holy Spirit hovers over the formless void bringing order out of chaos (see Gen 1:2). Evangelizing seeks to do the same, creating opportunities and encounters, bringing order and purpose into people's lives by helping them to make sense of hopeless situations and opening up new and productive pathways. In Genesis, we also read how, after disobeying God, Adam and Eve hid in fear and felt vulnerable in the knowledge of their nakedness (see Gen. 3:11). Fear and vulnerability are often the roots of our reluctance to evangelize and often account for the resistance of those being evangelized. Several verses later we read of the first call to repentance, which would restore the relationship with God. This is our mission as disciples: to collaborate with God in reuniting others to Him. Put otherwise, missionary disciples lead others to conversion.

The way we approach evangelizing is called the *Genesis Model*. It has evolved naturally from our experiences of evangelizing and then reflecting on these encounters at monthly

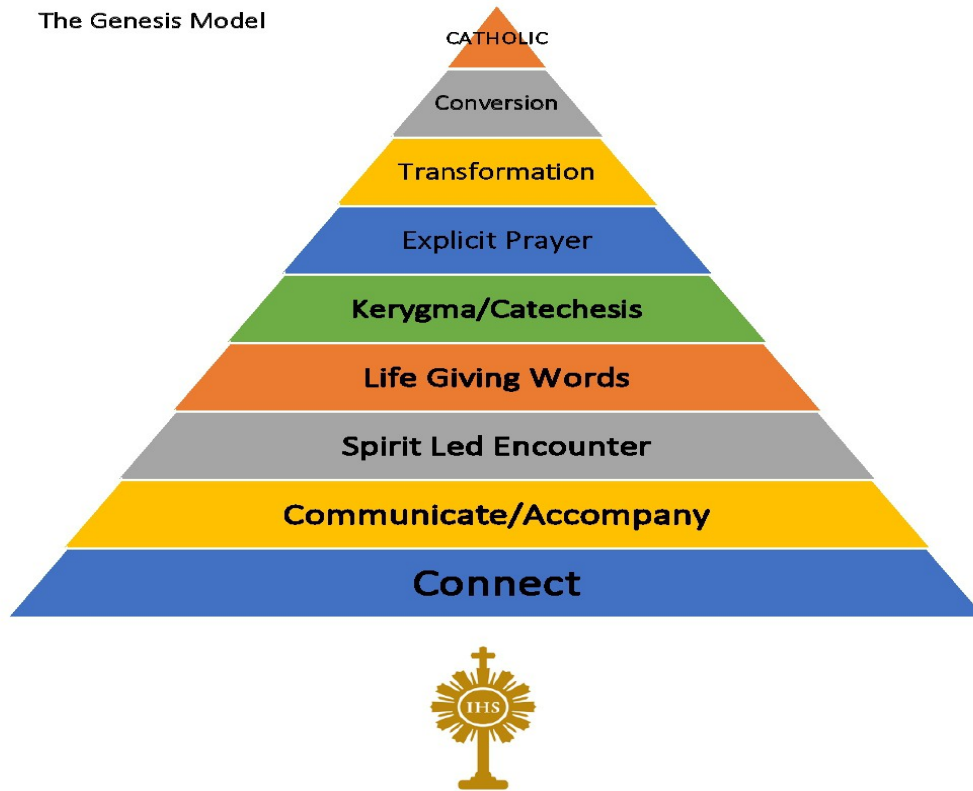
meetings. When sharing and listening to fruitful encounters, we pondered what we have experienced and heard, thought about what did and did not go well, and considered what we and others could have done differently. We learned from each other's experiences (we call this a *living apprenticeship*) and so were better equipped for the encounters to come. Over time, a discernible pattern of distinct steps began to emerge. These formed the basis of the Genesis Model.

The beauty of this method is its simplicity. It can work in all situations because it is rooted in the act and art of meaningful conversation, which is an essential element of humanity. These conversations are combined and elevated with the most vital, life-giving of all subjects: Jesus Christ.

Working this way can provide a practical way for a graced venture with the living Lord, between you and the person you encounter. All is made real, natural and “now” in the simplicity of human conversation. We have been fundamentally equipped in hearing and speech so that we can continue to promulgate God's revelation to the people who cross our path in any one day at any one given moment.

Note that not all of the steps in the model are used in every encounter. Sometimes they are not appropriate to the situation, but the model is a useful structure to get started, and to identify the next logical step in many conversations. It also reveals areas for personal growth in evangelizing as we compare our experiences to the framework.

The Genesis Model



We suggest that you start with the first three steps. These are immediately possible for every Catholic. Practice each day until those first steps come naturally to you. By doing the first ones, you will build confidence and soon see opportunities for taking further steps as the Holy Spirit works with your commitment to step out.

Pray

We wrote at length about our maxim of *Prayer*. Disciples must pray daily that the Lord will show them an opportunity to share the Good News. The Genesis Mission is rooted and ring-fenced in prayer. The whole Genesis Mission method and the Mission Made Possible initiative was born from many hours spent before the Blessed Sacrament. At every meeting MMP gathering, there is a time of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

Evangelizing is the work of the Holy Spirit, and attempting this without His grace is futile. A simple prayer repeated periodically throughout the day is enough to keep us alert to opportunity. Still, our lives should be built on a routine of prayer that never waivers despite the many distractions of life.

If daily Mass is possible, make it happen. Pray the rosary each day, and consider the Divine Office. Regular Confession is a must. These things will be your armor against evil spirits, apathy, despondency, and fear. Endeavor to live in truth and transparency in harmony with the Gospel, and you will grow as a disciple and a missionary.

Connect

Connecting with others is the first and fundamental step. This can be challenging for many who need to learn and practice the art of connecting. Some people are naturally “chatty” and talkative, but for many of us, it is not easy. We are self-conscious, nervous, or sometimes just can't be bothered. We love our comfort zones, and only engage with people we already know. But Christ calls us to look outward. So, if we are committed to becoming proactive and opening up opportunity, we must get over ourselves and become connectors.

Start simply by being more aware of every person who crosses your path. Really look at them. Start to notice details about them. Then begin to make eye contact and smile. Make small talk with your waitress or someone in line behind you. Compliment someone. Maybe you can offer assistance, or better still, ask for assistance.

Challenge yourself each day to do something to bridge the gap between you and another person. Soon this will become a habit that will help you feel confident as you start to see that God-given opportunity is almost everywhere. With prayer, the next steps will naturally follow.

By purposefully setting out every day to connect, you will be surprised at what transpires. You will find that you have a dialogue within yourself at once encouraging you with what you could say and at the same time trying to convince you it won't work or that you will be rejected and feel foolish. Take hold of the dialogue and turn to the Holy Spirit. It is He who is the encourager. Go at your own pace, enjoy the challenge and have fun with it.

Communicate/Accompany

The Genesis Method focuses on the other person, and therefore we need to cultivate a healthy interest and natural curiosity in other people's lives.

We don't go out to impose our views on people or tell our stories to them. We go out *to listen to them*. We explore a person's experiences and how these have formed their ideas about God and matters of faith so that we may find an opportunity to gently help them to discover the truth. We want to accompany them and step into their world during the time we have with them. We want to reconnect someone with the faith that has been lost through life's trials. Or we might seek to be a bridge of trust that will ultimately lead them to know Jesus. To do this, we have to engage in dialogue, create rapport, and display warmth and empathy coupled with genuine curiosity and healthy interest born of the love that God has placed in our hearts.

To encourage someone to open up, we ask open questions and listen carefully. We can then follow up with a further inquiry based on their response. Remember God's fantastic plan was to equip us perfectly with two ears and only one mouth. We should use them in the proportions they have been given.

So, once we have connected with somebody, how do we encourage them to tell us something about their life? Offer a little something about yourself, as this tends to open the way for you to be able to ask something similar. For example, to open the way for a conversation with the lady in the charity shop, I told her it was my day off work and immediately followed it up with, "How long have you worked here?"

Sometimes, this can be a good way to take the conversation deeper or to turn it toward faith. You will remember the lady I spoke to while I was out running. I said to her that I had been told about an abbey not far away and immediately followed with, "Do you know it?" This prompted her to tell me she had been there for midnight Mass!

Listening well is a vital skill that must be learned. Often in a conversation we are formulating a response before the other person has finished speaking; by jumping in too soon, we potentially redirect the conversation and miss the deeply held views that the other person has not yet expressed. It is one of the reasons that the “no commenting” rule has been an important (albeit unpopular) discipline during our weekly sessions. At our monthly Parish Evangelization Team meetings, we continue this discipline during the “sharing of encounters” section. We simply want to listen to the person. This practice helps us in encounters, so that the conversation remains about the other person.

Good listening means learning as much from what is not said as from what is said. We must become adept at looking behind and beyond the spoken words and ask, “Where are they coming from? What is the experience of this person?” We do this by being sensitive to changes in tone, a fleeting expression or repeated phrases. A repeated phrase usually indicates an underlying issue to explore, and if a person twice alludes to something even vaguely, it usually means they want you to ask about it.

We consider body language and change of tone or pace, the language of the body as well as that of the tongue. We become wholly attentive and given to the other person, absorbing their life at that moment, and picking up clues so that we can perhaps probe deeper to help a person clear any confusion and achieve clarity of thought.

The Holy Spirit guides soul listening. As we leave behind our own agenda, and focus on the other person, we grow in our perceptiveness of the voice of the Holy Spirit. From this listening, more profound and clarifying questions should arise; these will be key to a meaningful encounter.

Spirit-Led Encounter

The Holy Spirit is always present, but here we refer to the first “nudge” that there is a conversation that can take a more meaningful turn. Recall some of the encounters we shared. The Holy Spirit was relentless in prompting me (Michele) to speak with the soldier. He alerted me to the opportunities with the Last Supper picture and nudged me to ask the lady in the charity shop a question that was going to move us both beyond our comfort zones.

We come to recognize these opportunities by having our spiritual antennae increasingly tuned to His “voice.” But how do we know it is Him? Often, our first reaction to His

voice is negative. “I can't do! I can't ask that question!” We feel vulnerable. But these are pivotal moments, and we are faced with a split-second decision to either dive in or duck out.

If you receive the nudge during a conversation, the first and immediate step is to start a three-way conversation, silently asking the Holy Spirit for the right words, while at the same time listening to your new friend while you wait for the right words to come.

Be calm. If you don't know what to say, it is good because you have moved yourself out of the way and are now giving the Holy Spirit room. Don't be afraid of silence. Sometimes a person needs time to absorb what they have said. *Often their words are a surprise to themselves.* It is common that a person only makes full sense of something once they have spoken it. If you are unsure of what the person has said, ask a clarifying question. The chances are, if you are confused, they are too. Such questions include: What do you mean by X? Can you tell me again? Have I got this right?

Remember that our job is not to fix anything. We deal with the person, not the problem. If the person is telling you about the problem they are having with someone else, you need to refocus them on their part in the situation. The person you can help is them (not their friend, spouse, or enemy). You are ministering to their soul.

In Jeremiah 1:9, the Lord says, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.” Will you trust Him?

Life-Giving Words

As Christians, we are to be agents of life and change. God wants to use us to breathe life into others, to put flesh and sinew on dry bones, to raise them from the grave (see Ezekiel 37). Life-giving words are words of love that build people up, remind them of their dignity and worth, or lift their spirits. As St. Paul taught us, “Use helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed so that what you say will do good to those who hear you” (Eph. 4:29). This ought not be something foreign; it is natural for us to want to give comfort and empathy to show we care.

People often feel hopeless and inadequate, so we look to restore goodness, beauty, and truth, and to open up a new pathway of hope by identifying the positives about them in the situation. We translate and articulate, based on what they have said, how God is now

and might in the future work in their lives, offering them a new perspective which can help them move forward in hope.

If someone has told you something joyful, celebrate with them and encourage them to see how God has been at work! If their situation is difficult, speak warm words of empathy and hope. Life-giving words prepare a person for the Good News by emphasizing their inherent value. Fr. Jon praised the courage of the lady who bravely fought her attackers, and then he asked if he might pray with her.

Life-giving words prepare a person for Good News through recognition of their inherent value and the opening of new perspectives. It is often at this point we can introduce the Cross and Resurrection to herald the next step. Remember the lady in the charity shop who had lost her son? In the aftermath she had visited a spiritualist, so I told her, “The truth is much more specific, and I think it is going to help you.”

Kerygma/Catechesis

Kerygma: The initial proclamation that Jesus died and rose again, and calls us to repentance, faith, and the sacramental life within His Church.

Catechesis: To “echo/pass on” the fuller teachings of Jesus and His Church.

These are very “churchy” words, and we wouldn’t use them other than in a church environment, but if an encounter reaches this stage, you’ve already been engaged with a person and heard their story in some detail. During the time you have been listening and encouraging, the person has opened up and a level of trust has been established. You have registered many things and recognized that this is the appropriate time to share what you can of the Gospel.

Based on the actual conversation, questions, and listening, you can now weave in a message of faith that is entirely relevant to what you have heard. This is a *vital* point. Our faith-sharing is not unnaturally added or inserted into the conversation but flows naturally from the conversation.

The beauty of the Genesis Model is that the Good News is not bolted on to the encounter or inserted at any cost. Introduced at the appropriate time, it flows directly from what you have heard. It has to be both *objective* (e.g. God loves you, Jesus died and rose again, we are called to repentance and faith, or other truths that naturally flow from these central fact) and *subjective* (what this means for you is...).

For example, in chapter five we read about the lady whose son had died. Through our conversation, she heard that God is love and only wants the best for us, that He came in the person of Jesus to die on the cross and rise again. This is the objective *kerygma*. From that truth, the message became entirely and explicitly relevant to her situation when she was told, “What this means for you is that death is not the end, and you can be with your son again.”

When the Gospel came to her this way, it made sense to her. It was completely relevant to her situation and sensitively appropriate in timing.

Not all encounters get this far. Others may jump straight to the prayer stage. Many factors dictate what is appropriate, and good discernment flowing from your silent prayer will lead you. You step out to do what you can as the situation allows; nothing said or done in the name of the Lord is wasted. The encounter is relational, and as a consequence of *soul listening* and empathetic responses, we will have struck a kind of friendship.

It might be appropriate at this point that we share something from our own lives or a similar situation in someone else’s that inspires hope. Alternatively or additionally, a piece of Scripture may come to mind. Regardless, it is important to keep focused on their situation and not to get distracted talking about yourself.

In our early days of evangelizing, we might not get as far as proclaiming the Gospel explicitly, but with experience, we learn when and how to do so. We do not measure the success of our work by how long or significant the encounters are, but simply by how often we tried.

Part B

Explicit Prayer

Praying with people is a big step for many, but despite our preconceived ideas and fears of rejection, people are surprisingly open. Praying together goes a long way in the healing process and consolidates the encounter.

If you feel ready, simply ask, “May I say a prayer?” Keep the prayer short. Draw in the significant elements of what you have heard, thus making it personal for them by using names. Pray confidently and trustingly that Jesus is going to step in to improve their

situation. Watch the person for signs of hope and acceptance, such as clasped hands, nodding, tears or a big smile. This may well be the first experience of having someone pray with them, and with God's grace, it can be very powerful.

Explicit prayer means the words are sourced from the conversation you have had instead of formulaic prayers (although it is sometimes appropriate to end with an Our Father or Hail Mary, which they can join in with if they know it). Prayer should be courageously proposed but never imposed (so always ask permission).

Praying with people opens a supernatural portal for them. It brings the living Lord onto their radar and will continue working in them when you part company. The Holy Spirit is active from the start of the encounter, but, if we can progress to praying with the person there and then, the Lord is made present in a very tangible way.

Transformation

Often you will see people visibly changed by the end of the encounter, particularly if you have prayed with them. You may see happy tears or a smile. They might thank you and speak with new hope. Sometimes they will stand straighter and look brighter. If you see obvious signs, ask them how they are feeling and affirm that you can see a change. If you do not see any visible signs, don't worry. Remember that it was only later that the disciples on the road to Emmaus realized they had met the risen Lord.

It is important to note that with each encounter, we experience a new transformation ourselves. Our faith and courage are strengthened as we experience the power of the Holy Spirit working through us.

I (Michele) once had a conversation with a young woman who shyly told me she was a Christian. I asked her what she believed about Jesus, and she said, "I believe Jesus is the Son of God." Almost as soon as the last syllable had left her mouth, she said, louder and with more conviction, "Yes, I believe Jesus is the son of God!" As she said the words for the second time, she seemed to grow a bit because she had voiced something amazing, and it had a fantastic effect on her. "Do you know," she continued, "I don't think I had ever said that out loud before," and then she made a little punch in the air!

In Ezekiel 37, the prophet is told, "Prophesy! Prophesy! Breathe life into these dry bones and I will make them live." To prophesy, to speak life-giving truth, you have to speak and speak with conviction. By speaking, you give shape to your thoughts and

make the intangibles comprehensible for yourself and others. “And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them” (Ezek. 37:7-8).

Evangelizing requires us to abandon ourselves to God while trusting in Him and being carried on the wings of faith. It is a massive act of abandonment carried out in faith and total trust in God. A profound and beautiful fruit of evangelizing is that it serves as a “fast track” to a personal understanding of the various dimensions of theology (faith seeking understanding). For instance, as you grow in the conviction of who Jesus is and what He has done for us, your *Christology* will come alive. As you carry out the mission of the Church (evangelization), you will grow in your *ecclesiology* by experiencing her mission. Your *missiology* (sense of mission) will skyrocket because you are living it. Your *eschatology* (comprehension of the last things: death, judgment, heaven, and hell), will establish clarity for your life. Who you are (your *ontology*), your deepest identity, and sense of being in Christ will become unshakeable. You will grow in confidence and freedom, not to be the “best version of yourself,” but as the authentic and original creation that God meant you to be. This happens as you hunger for more of Him and strive for holiness and purity of soul.

Conversion

While we would like every person we encounter to experience an immediate conversion, often we are simply a link in a series of events that God consolidates in His time. There is always a bigger picture, and our part, while small, may be a vital step. Nothing we do for God is wasted. We should never undervalue even the smallest effort. After an encounter, we must pray for our new friend so that they will become a new creation through knowing the love of God.

All of mankind is called to a living faith in the one true God revealed in Jesus Christ. Therefore, anything that leads someone closer to accepting Jesus as Lord and embracing conversion should never be undervalued. This conversion involves turning from sin and fully embracing God and His Lordship.

When Jesus asks the question, “Who do you say that I am?” (Matt. 16:15), it is only by faith and the action of the Holy Spirit that we can respond that *Jesus is God*. This is a vital breakthrough point where a personal opening to God's grace has occurred, but conversion involves a fuller reorientation of life that flows from this acknowledgment of

who Jesus is. Conversion involves that pivotal decision where someone is prepared to displace themselves from the centre of their own life and put Jesus there instead.

A choice is made to become a disciple of Jesus and, like Him, to do the Father's will. "Thy will be done" becomes the hallmark of a converted life in which Jesus exhorts us to "[t]ake up your cross daily and follow me" (Matt. 16:24).

This following of Jesus, this conversion, also involves embracing and living by the truth revealed to us in Jesus. In evangelizing, we help people to see the falsity of what the world tells us and how we are blinded and deceived by it. Without Jesus, anyone will be, to a certain degree, enslaved by worldly and false thinking. We want people to know that this is not the way it has to be. "If you live by my commands, you will truly be my disciples: you will know the truth and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32). This freedom is the fruit of conversion and God's plan for everyone.

Remember that sometimes we are simply a signpost pointing the way to God. We manage only to link a beautiful sunset with "the artist," or an extraordinary coincidence with "the author." Other times—with practice, experience, and trust in the Holy Spirit—we can accompany a person as they examine their contribution to the sinfulness of the world and seek forgiveness from the only One who can save them. The witness of how we live the Gospel before those in our immediate sphere of influence (home, neighbourhood, workplace, and church), coupled with the intention to share our faith verbally, are foundational to our discipleship and powerful conduits to conversion.

Catholic

It is our ultimate goal that *everyone* should have the fullness of truth and the means to salvation that are found in the Church that Jesus Himself established. People are lost and confused. They wander without a map or compass. They do not know where they are, where they have come from, and where they are going. They hear a bewildering mix of competing thoughts, opinions, belief systems and philosophies, leaving them to conclude that one man's opinion is as good as another, or ultimately settling for the cynical words of Pilate, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). Within this void, they suffer from a lack of understanding of their own identity, and so create an identity built on the sand of what is superficial and false.

Many suffer from a resultant deep sense of isolation and lack of belonging, which strikes at their core and leaves them feeling fearful and vulnerable. In answer to this, God has

given us the Catholic Church to satisfy and heal the deepest needs and wounds of our souls and our humanity. Through the Scriptures and the Church, He feeds us with a truth that is not of our own making but comes straight from His own heart.

This truth cuts through all confusion and shines as a light in the darkness. Through the Church, we have a vision for life in its fullness so that we can know who we are, where we have come from, and where we can go. Jesus has not left us as orphans but walks with us still, in our pilgrimage of life, ministering to us with the life-giving, forgiving, strengthening, and healing power of the sacraments. In Jesus, God is calling all mankind home, into this one eternal family where our deepest sense of belonging can be fulfilled.

The baptismal rite reminds us, “This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it, in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Every person has a right to hear the invitation to this faith before they die. They are invited to live it out in the bosom of the Catholic Church. We recognize, however, that not every encounter will lead a person into the fulness of faith. Even so, within any conversation or encounter, we can share the fruits of belonging to the Catholic Church and how they speak to our living human experience, thereby sowing seeds of understanding and enlightenment that may encourage them to seek full communion.

Encounter

It was Saturday afternoon, the day before Divine Mercy Sunday. Several members of the parish evangelization team headed downtown. We (Fr. Jon and Michele) had some Divine Mercy prayer cards and decided we would take the opportunity to offer them to shoppers in the hope of encouraging some encounters. We first set up a small prayer station with a sizeable image of the Divine Mercy, where we prayed for the Holy Spirit to bring us those in need. Some of the team stayed to pray the rosary while the rest of us went forth with the prayer cards.

We made sure not just to hand them out anonymously. We were keen to be the friendly face of the Church, Christians with a sincere interest in the lives of others, ready to bring Jesus’ healing love and truth wherever we can.

We each had a different approach according to our individual personalities. Some simply said, “Hi, can I offer you a prayer card?” Others began with, “Hi, how are you? There is a group of us out today from our local church, and we are celebrating a special day and offering these prayer cards.” The more gregarious ones approached with the card

proffered cheerily and a “Hi! We are Christians out spreading the love. Let me share this prayer card with you!” Some of us varied our approach according to the individual coming our way. But we were always joyful, and as Pope Francis says, joy is attractive.

Even so, many people walked on by, uninterested. The rejection always smarted for a moment or two, but we were comforted because the Holy Spirit was in charge. The majority of people were delightful, polite, and respectful. And, the brighter your smile and the more relaxed your approach, the more delightful people are. Love is the greatest resource we have, as is undoubtedly proven when street evangelizing.

We had to remember the maxim, “Drop your preconceived ideas” because otherwise we would make judgments based on appearances. We might decide who we think will (or won't) be interested. So many times, we would be entirely wrong. We needed to stop assuming people would say “no” and instead assume people would say “yes.” We had to remember that God has no favorites and that everyone has the right to the Good News. We needed to seek to be Spirit-led at all times by whispering a silent prayer to keep us attuned to His promptings.

The man walking toward me (Michele) was small in stature, but his scowl was huge! I could see him aggressively muttering to himself. He was clearly very angry about something. My inclination was to turn away, for there were plenty of other people passing me on both sides. I decided it would be a waste of time to approach him. I worried that he might have mental health issues and make an embarrassing scene. I prayed quickly, knowing I was letting my fear and vulnerability dominate. If ever there was a man that needed to know Jesus, he was walking in my direction.

Despite these hesitations, I found myself in front of him and proffered the prayer card with the words, “Here is the hope you need.”

He was clearly startled and stopped; he grabbed the card, gave it a brief glance, and blurted out, “I need some f&*@ing hope.”

“Tell me,” I replied simply.

He launched into an angry tirade, almost shouting, with expletives coming thick and fast. He told me he had arrived home that morning, having spent the night at a friend's house, and found he had been evicted from his flat. His belongings were thrown into the hallway, which resulted in some damages. He claimed that until now, he had never

once been late with his rent. He professed to be the perfect tenant while his landlady was unreasonable, vindictive, and dishonest. He said she was running a brothel and was herself a prostitute.

From the way he spoke and the colourful language he used, I knew that he needed to get it all off his chest. I stayed quiet, silently praying until, eventually, he ran out of steam. I smiled, put my hand on his arm, and simply asked, “What is your name?” “Peter,” he replied.

We then introduced ourselves, and he seemed a bit calmer, but there was still a bitter edge in his voice as he said, “What are you doing out here, giving out these? Look around you. Look at these people. Nobody is interested. Nobody will talk to you. You're wasting your time!”

“But you are talking to me,” I said. He grunted and launched into another angry story about how he went to a social club for a drink. At this “social” club, “nobody spoke to me. The whole time I was in there, I stood at the bar surrounded by people, and nobody spoke to me – what kind of social club is that?”

I asked him if he made any attempt to speak to anyone. “I did,” he retorted. “I told the bartender exactly what I thought of his social club and stormed out.”

I had been listening for a good while, stood my ground, and endured his terrible swearing. I decided it was time to do some straight talking. And so this is the basic message I shared with him.

“Peter, you have told me how awful your landlady is, how awful all the people walking past us are, and about the unfriendly people in the social club, and you have told me I am wasting my time trying to bring some good news into people's lives. You have made some big judgments—some may be valid, and some are definitely not. What I want to know is this: What about you? Have you stopped to look at your own part in all this? You are angry, bitter, resentful, and disappointed with everyone and everything. All that is inside you comes out of your mouth, adding to the darkness and negativity. Is that what you want for your life? Is that what you want to see and experience? You managed to paint me into your entirely negative scenario, assuming that my life and what I do is pointless. I can tell you that you are wrong. You see, the difference is right there on that card you have in your hand: I have hope. I know that 2000 years ago, something incredible happened which changed the world not just then but for all time. Jesus died

on the cross so that I can be free, so that I can make the right choices, to choose the better way. I get angry with people, and sometimes I just feel really fed up. I have a rant too, like you, but ultimately I know that adding sin to sin is not the way. It doesn't change anything for the better!”

Peter was listening intently. To my surprise, he said, “It's funny you should say that. For some reason, I went and sat in a church the other day and really liked it. I picked up a book with a picture of Him [pointing to the prayer card] being crucified on the cross. Most of the people in the picture weren't bothered. They seemed to be laughing or just ignoring it, but there was a small group who were crying and stuff. They were his mother and one of his disciples, I suppose. People are still the same today. Indifferent. Aren't they?”

“Many are, but often it is because they don't know what Jesus has done for them. They don't know any other way. They don't know that Jesus was the victor, not the victim. He died for love of them. He died to conquer sin and death. That's why I come out here: so that people might know that they can choose a better way, a better life. There is a raging battle between good and evil. Look around, and you can see it; look inside yourself, and you will see it there. That is why Jesus is so important, He came and conquered evil for all time, but we have to choose Him, His way.”

I proceeded to tell him about original sin and eventually asked him again whether he wanted a better way for himself and the world around him. He said, “I certainly do,” so I told him if he wanted to step into grace, he must be genuinely sorry for all his past wrongs, ask for forgiveness and forgive others, and ask Jesus into his life to help him to make new choices. Then I prayed with him that this would be so.

My friend was utterly and entirely different in attitude and demeanor. With a broad smile, he told me as much. We parted shortly afterward, so I gave him a copy of Rediscover Jesus by Matthew Kelly, and advised him to go to the Catholic Church nearest to his home and speak with the priest.

His bus was pulling in, and he ran for it. As I watched him, he turned and shouted, “Thank you. I'm glad I ran into you. I'm gonna start the book on the bus!”