

**SCREEN:** Pray for Manchester

**ME:** And now Manchester.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the

people of Manchester and the UK---

especially the victims and their families---

reeling from this past week's

senseless tragedy.

In the years since 9/11 the world

has endured more than it's share

of suffering at the hands of terrorists.

In recent years there have been attacks in

France, Belgium, and Germany.

And in the past month there were deadly

attacks in Iraq, Pakistan, India and

Afghanistan...28 killed yesterday in Egypt...

the list goes on.

And because the list goes on and never seems to end, I'm embarrassed to admit that 'breaking news' doesn't affect me like it used to.

A friend of mine shared that he's become kind of numb to tragedy.

I'm feeling a little like that, maybe you are too.

We wring our hands, shake our heads,  
maybe say a prayer, then get on with  
our lives.

The greatest tragedy may be in  
surrendering to the attitude that  
there is no point in getting upset because  
there is nothing to be done.

**WE:** But that's not true.

Not true at all.

Not only can we do something,  
we must do something.

**SCREEN:** Living Stones main screen

Today is week three of our message series  
titled, Living Stones.

Throughout this month we've been hearing  
how Jesus' first disciples responded to

the tragedy of his death.

They could have easily surrendered to

hopelessness,

succumbed to the darkness of hatred and

vengeance, or given up entirely.

But they didn't.

And because they didn't they have

so much to teach us.

They show us that living stones

(which is another term for followers of

Jesus) don't wring their hands,

shake their heads or stop with prayer.

No, in the face of hatred and violence and

death, living stones build the Kingdom;

they sacrifice so Christ's love reigns.

As we celebrate the Ascension of the Lord,  
let's look at what they did and  
what we can do today.

**SCREEN:** blank red background

**GOD:** The bible tells us that after

Jesus rose from the dead he appeared to  
his followers many times over  
the span of 40 days.



What was he doing in those encounters?

He was schooling them in discipleship.

He was also healing their pain so they

could share the Good News with others.

Jesus helped them channel their anger

and sadness into weapons of love.

But then the day came for Jesus to

ascend to heaven.

The first reading from the Acts of the

Apostles records the final marching orders

he gave his disciples. Jesus said this:

**SCREEN:** in a few days you will be

**baptized with the Holy Spirit.**

**....and you will be my witnesses in**

**Jerusalem, throughout Judea and**

**Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.**

*“You will be my witnesses...to all the world.”*

It was Jesus presenting his action plan.

He was telling his disciples how they would  
bring his message of love to others.

Each of them would be a witness,

a living stone building his Kingdom.

His plan for them was solid:

they would have the Holy Spirit to lead

them,

his teachings to guide them and

the strength of each other for support.

For three years he showed them

how to do as he did and the message

was clear and simple:

1 be totally dedicated to the mission

(make it your number one priority),

2 give it all you have to give (*this is not a 9-5 job. You can't be half-hearted or lukewarm or shirk your calling*)---

give it all you've got---and

3 grow deeper each day in your commitment to the vision.

Complete dedication, 110% commitment, growing deeper daily.

And because they embraced Jesus' plan  
and followed his example, they were  
successful.

They built on the foundation he established  
and the Church grew by leaps and bounds.

Because they gave all, we are here now.

In the Gospel today the message Jesus  
delivered before his ascension was the

same, but he used a slightly different phrase to lay out his plan.

**SCREEN:** Go make disciples

He said: *Go make disciples.*

Go make disciples. It sums up all of Jesus' lessons on discipleship.

It's also a simple way to describe what a 'living stone' does.

**YOU:** This was the mission of the Apostles,  
it's your mission too.

On the day of your baptism,

God poured His Spirit into your soul and  
gave you your marching orders.

At that moment the direction of your life  
was set.

The purpose of your life is to be a



disciple-making disciple.

A disciple-making disciple.

Now I know that can sound like a tall order;  
maybe an impossible mission.

But don't worry; you have everything you  
need to succeed.

You've been given the same Holy Spirit  
the Apostles received.

You have Jesus' teachings to guide you.

You have the sacraments to feed you.

And you have the strength and support  
of other disciples---all of us.

You can be a living stone and build the  
Kingdom.

The place God wants you to direct your  
efforts is right here at St. Pius X.

And you make it happen when like the

Apostles you commit to give;

give of your time, your talent and your

treasure---which is your financial resources.

**SCREEN:** To make disciples who

**joyfully live out the mission of Jesus**

**Christ in Bowie. -*SPX vision statement***

When you commit to give you enable us as

a parish to go make disciples and  
fulfill this mission.

But for us to succeed, we need  
everyone's participation.

Last weekend at my Masses I shared the  
statistic that about 50% of our members are  
committed generous givers to St. Pius.

Now half is good, especially when you look

at the national average for Catholic  
parishes.

And I want to share with you all the ways  
our parish is able to fulfill our mission  
and change the world.

Because our members give we are making  
a difference in the lives of hundreds of  
children who participate in babysitting,

SLAM, Kids Ministry, and our

Middle School and High School Ministries.

Giving enables us to form small groups for

adults, to share the faith with those

becoming Catholic and those already

Catholic through bible study and

our parish retreat program.

Because our members give we can give

hope to those at S.O.M.E. a soup kitchen in  
DC and at Assumption Outreach in  
Anacostia, and through our Sharing Pantry,  
our SVDP Society, our Honduras Mission,  
Habitat-for-Humanity, Warm Nights,  
the Gabriel Network and  
the Bowie Interfaith Food Pantry.

Because we have generous givers we've

reached out to the lost and welcomed back

Bowie Bob and Bowie Bob--

the de-churched and unchurched in our  
neighborhoods.

And because our members give everybody

here and those returning experience

Christ's love through worship that is

inviting, engaging, and uplifting.



All of this is possible from the committed,  
generous giving of just 50% of our  
members.

*Imagine what we could do if everyone  
made this commitment!*

How many more families and children  
could we hand on the faith to?

How many more adults could we engage?

How many more of the hungry and poor  
could we serve?

How many more Bowie Bobs & Barbs  
could we welcome?

How much more could we do to  
change the world and build the Kingdom?

Look around; there is room in our pews  
for those not yet here.

For our parish to fulfill our vision

we need each of you to commit.

When it comes to your giving, this is what

your commitment should look like:

**SCREEN: Planned**

**Prioritized**

**Percentage**

**Progressive**

So first, your giving should be *planned*.

This means you are not just tossing the spare cash in your purse or pocket into the collection basket,

(what one preacher refers to as “tipping God”), but your giving is planned; it’s part of your budget; you’re giving is intentional.

Your giving should be a *priority* meaning your gift to God comes first, right off the top, before you do anything else with your money.

A few years ago we introduced online giving to our parish.

It is the best way to take care of these first two points.

The company we use is called Faith Direct.

I give through Faith Direct.

It is simple, easy and takes all the  
guesswork out of giving.

Your giving should be based on a  
*percentage* of what you have.

When the bible talks about giving it  
uses the standard of a 'tithe' or 10%.

But the percentage part is more important than the 10 part.

Pick a percentage and give to the church using a percentage, any percentage.

And finally your giving should be progressive, meaning that you

continue raising it each year as your

income grows--- if you get a raise or

cost of living adjustment you pass that on  
in your offering.

Where does all this come from?

From the bible (God's Word) and from  
Jesus' relationship with his Apostles.

As I said earlier, he had a plan  
for his followers.

He gave them an example of what



total dedication looks like.

And showed them how to grow deeper

each day in commitment to His vision.

Now Christ is asking you to do as they did;

to be a living stone so the Kingdom

can keep growing.

**SCREEN:** Living Stones main screen

Next week, on Pentecost, we will

conclude this message series

with our annual offertory pledge renewal.

Each Spring we ask our members to

pledge their support to the parish

for the coming year.

Now even though we are considering an

expansion plan for our facilities,

the Pentecost renewal is entirely about

your regular parish support.

This past week all our members received a letter in the mail asking you to renew your support for the coming year.

With the letter you received a pledge card to fill out and bring with you to Mass next week and also the information contained on this takeaway (hold up).

It can help you determine what your giving should look like.

Be sure to get one as you leave today.

They are at the doors of the church.

And take some time this week to pray and reflect on your calling and your dedication to St. Pius.

**SCREEN:** It is better to light one candle

than to curse the darkness.

## ***-The Christophers***

**WE:** There is a Catholic organization called

The Christophers; the name means

Christ-bearer.

They are dedicated to bringing Christ

to others.

This is their motto: *it is better to light one*

*candle than to curse the darkness.*

It is easy for us to look around our world,  
hear all bad news and feel helpless.

Jesus is calling us to be beacons of  
light and hope to all who are lost,  
despairing or confused.

So many people in our world are  
looking for answers.

They are looking for us!

Let us give of our whole selves to make

Jesus' Kingdom come here and now.

Let's accept our mission to

be living stones for Christ.