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Cardinal Wuerl: Pope Francis tells us not to 'trip over' Christian message

Joshua J. McElwee | Oct. 25, 2013 NCR Today
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Pope Francis is telling Catholics around the world not to "trip over" the Christian message by letting it become too complex, Cardinal Donald Wuerl said Thursday.

The pope, Wuerl said, is emphasizing: "The message is simple. Don't trip over it. Don't let it become so complex, so confusing that nobody can hear what you're saying."

Francis' basic message, said the cardinal, is: "God loves each one of us."

"We have to embrace one another in that love and see in each other not only the love of God but the image and the face of God," said Wuerl.

"Pope Francis urges us -- he says there are no borders, there are no limits," the cardinal continued. "Do not be afraid to go and to bring Christ into every area of life."

"Go," Wuerl urged. "[The pope] uses that so often in his homilies, in his talks. Go, go -- people are waiting to be invited into the mystery of the Kingdom. They're hungry to hear this wonderful news: God loves you. Can you imagine anything more beautiful than hearing it and believing it and knowing it?"

Wuerl, Washington's archbishop, was speaking Thursday night during a homily at a Mass hosted by the archdiocese's office for young adult ministry. Attended by some 500 Washington-area Catholics in their 20s and 30s, the Mass was intended to mark the ending of the Year of Faith.

Called by Pope Benedict XVI as a way to inspire "renewed conversion to the Lord," the special year ends Nov. 24.

Mentioning several times the retired pope's call for a "new evangelization" among the faithful, Wuerl also asked the young people to share their Catholic faith in basic ways.

Recalling meeting a woman considering conversion to Catholicism, Wuerl said he asked her what had drawn her to the faith. The woman, the cardinal said, pointed at a friend she had with her and said, "He did. He asked me."

"I thought, 'How simple it is,'" the cardinal said. "Just ask someone: 'Would you consider going to church with me on Sunday?'"

Continuing on the role of spreading the faith, Wuerl said an evangelist shows four qualities: Courage, connection to the church, urgency, and joy.

On the second point, the cardinal asked how, without connection to the church, "can any of us dare say these are the words of everlasting life?"

"Who would dare say that unless they're connected to that one living witness who can tell us what those words are?" he asked.

On the fourth point, Wuerl asked the young people to be persons of joy.

"It's great, good news: Jesus is risen," he said. "He's alive. He's with us. Surely, we can smile."

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