



Archdiocese of San Antonio
Most Rev. Gustavo García-Siller



**Homily for Professional Development Day
Department of Catholic Schools
October 17, 2014**

Today's gospel may make us uncomfortable: "Beware of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees." Is this simply an anti-Pharisaic or anti-Semitic warning? No, Jesus is addressing his disciples – all of us! When we think of hypocrites, we usually think of persons who say all the right things but do not live by them. They pretend, for example, to be Catholic, but they do not live a Christian life.

However, hypocrisy in this reading seems to be a bit different. Jesus warns about hypocrites who truly believe in him but do not say so publicly. They may personally accept the values of the gospel but do not proclaim them in the public arena. Why? Because of persecution or fear of ridicule, or simply to avoid controversy.

The point of this gospel reading is that disciples – those who follow Jesus – need to be open rather than secretive about their confession of faith. Moreover we are to trust in God who has numbered the very hairs of our head and knows us more intimately than we know ourselves – and who loves us endlessly!

As Catholic educators, because of our baptism, you and I have "heard the word of truth, the gospel of [our] salvation, and have believed in [Christ] and were sealed with the promised holy Spirit" (Eph 1:13). We are called and sent to be missionary disciples – Go out, Jesus tells us! Go out, Pope Francis tells us!

But how are we to do this effectively? How we communicate something is often as important as what we say. This is at the heart of the Spirit-led discussions taking place in Rome during the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops last week and this week – looking at the real and serious challenges to married and family life around the world and bringing the light of the gospel to shine on them. Under the guidance of the Holy Father, the Synod is wrestling with how to communicate more effectively and pastorally Catholic teaching about marriage and family life based on what is found in the revealed and inspired Word of God, the Bible.

St. John Paul II called for a “new evangelization,” a theme picked up and expanded by Pope Benedict and, now, by Pope Francis. Our current Holy Father is a master communicator – beginning with his gestures which often speak louder than his words. He lives out the values of the gospel each day in every human encounter and situation. He talks about the Church being like a field hospital on a battlefield, attending to the wounds of people who are hurting and vulnerable. He has famously said that we are to take care of their wounds and, after they have healed, to ask perhaps about their cholesterol levels!

As Catholic educators you are to be centered on the person of the risen Lord Jesus and challenged to carry out the threefold mission of Catholic education: to proclaim the gospel, to build a community of faith, and to serve all our sisters and brothers – as Jesus did – with compassion and love and healing and challenge! It is not enough to teach a child the three R's or the ABC's – to develop their minds. You must be committed to the education and formation of the whole child, beginning with taking care of his or her wounds -- then gently but firmly teaching them gospel values, the importance of community, and their mission to serve one another, especially the most vulnerable among us.

May Our Lady, our Mother, help us to be authentic disciples of her Son and show us how to love and care for all of God's children!