

Homily based on the readings from April 11, 2026 (Acts 4.13-21; Mark 16.9-15)

“It is *impossible* for us *not* to speak about what we have seen and heard.”

In today’s first reading, Peter and John give this simple yet profound response to the officials of the Sanhedrin – reacting to the demand that they cease proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. They do not argue, they do not complain – they merely affirm what they are intending to do. The directive they had been given – “not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus” – was utterly impossible for them to obey, as if they had been told to stop breathing or stop loving their family members. What they had been ordered to do, in fact, amounted to forsaking Christ himself.

The point, of course, is that being a Christian has inescapable consequences for our interactions with other people. Christianity, at its core, is a missionary religion. Every baptized individual – man, woman, or child – has an indispensable duty to share the faith with others. These

acts of evangelization can take on a wide range of different forms – including, but not limited to, the various corporal and spiritual works of mercy. None of us, though, is ever permitted to excuse ourselves from publicly practicing our faith. Just because our religion is *personal* does not make it *private*. While we must never call attention to *ourselves*, our Christian faith should be as obvious to an outside observer as the color of our skin.

Although it is not a uniquely modern problem, society today – just like 2000 years ago – desperately wants us to keep our faith to *ourselves*. In the United States, the First Amendment – which was explicitly written to guarantee the free exercise of religion – has been turned into a weapon for demolishing our nation’s Christian heritage. As Catholics, we must never hesitate to defend our rightful place in the public square – whether in court, in the media, or at the ballot box.

On a more personal level, many Christians feel constrained by a well-intentioned sense of politeness, downplaying beliefs and practices that

they fear others might find offensive. Obviously, we all need to be prudent in how we present our faith. If we come across as being aggressive or condescending, we are almost guaranteed to drive people away. Our goal must always be to win *souls*, not *arguments*.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of Christians err in the opposite direction – engaging in a timid form of self-censorship, rather than boldly witnessing to the eternal truths of our faith.

You may have heard this question before: if being Christian were made a crime, would there be enough evidence to convict us? We should all take that as a personal challenge. Following in the footsteps of Peter and John, we need to make sure that anyone seeking to prosecute us would have an *abundance* of evidence: not just a name in a baptismal registry or a few faded parish bulletins sitting around the house, but our *public* and *courageous* testimony to the saving power of Jesus Christ.